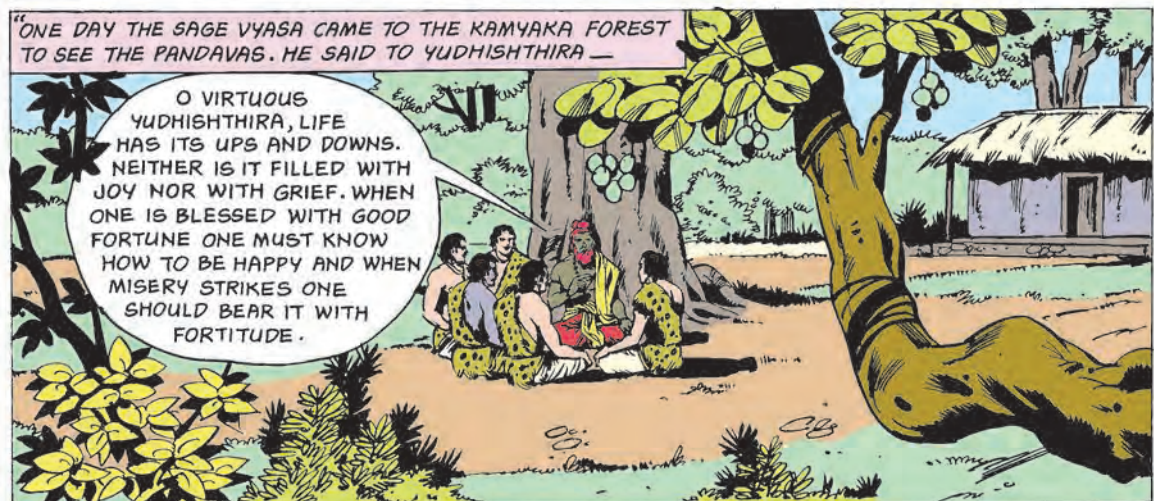
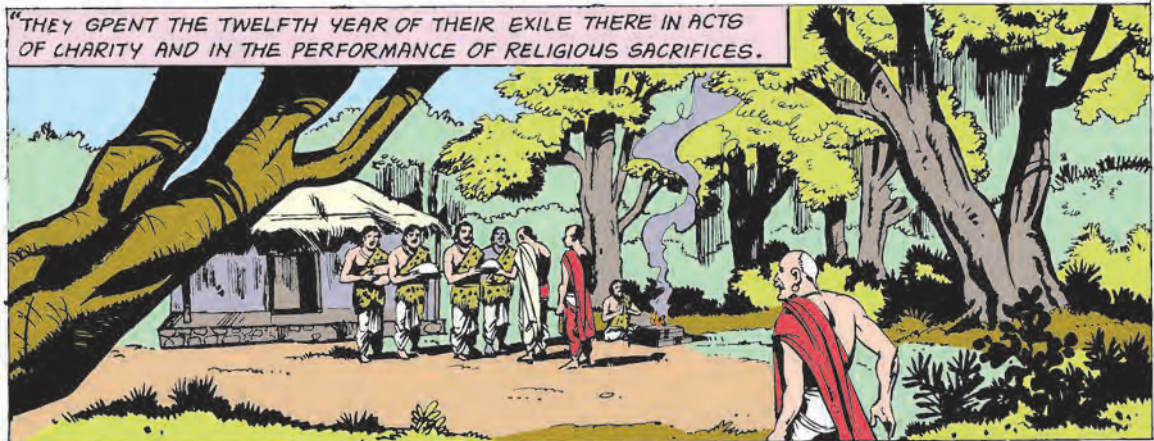
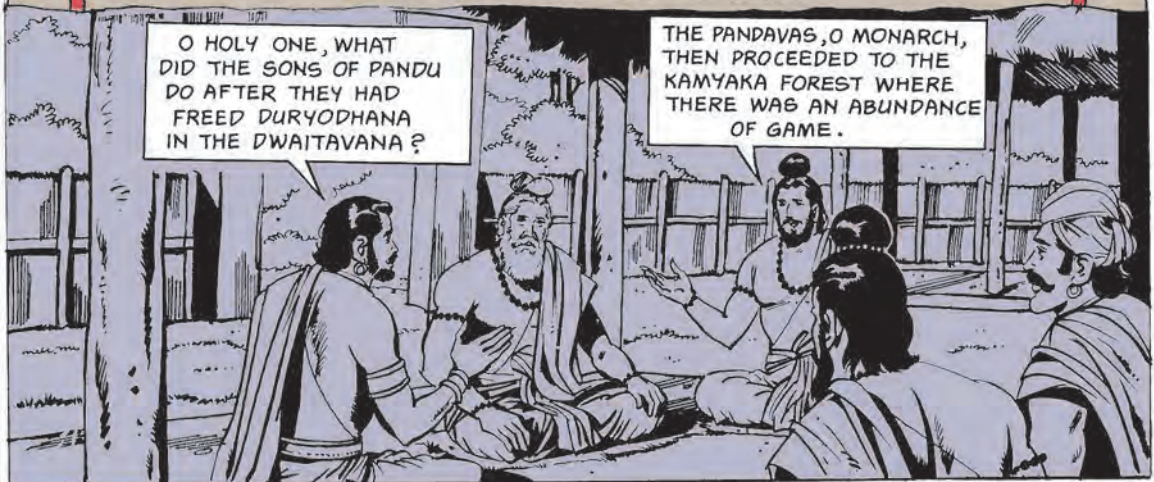
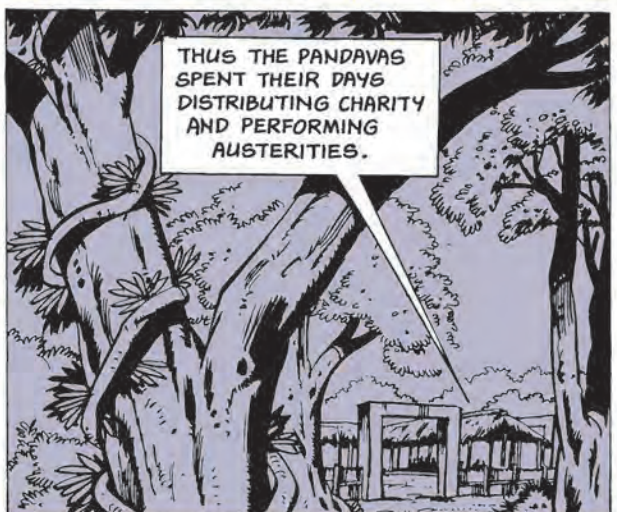
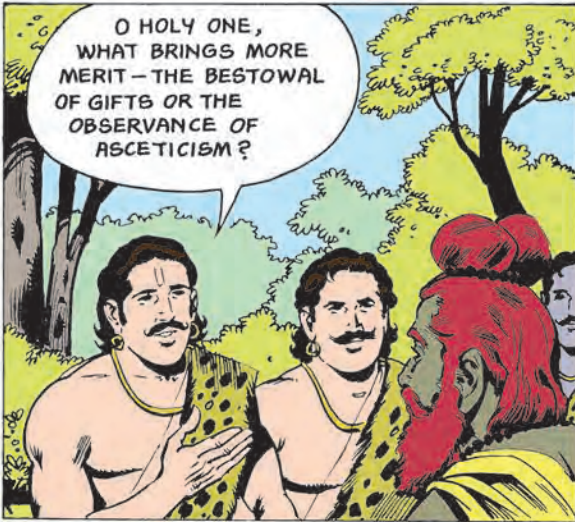


Mahabharata - 24

THE TWELFTH YEAR





MANY WERE THE SAGES WHO VISITED THEM IN THE FOREST. DRAUPADI FED ALL OF THEM FROM THE COPPER THALI THAT SURYA HAD GRANTED THE PANDAVAS. BUT SHE MADE SURE SHE WAS THE LAST ONE TO EAT. **



** THE FOOD FROM THIS THALI WAS INEXHAUSTIBLE AT EACH MEAL TILL DRAUPADI HAD EATEN.

"BUT THE PANDAVAS BEING HAPPY IN EXILE, FURTHER FILLED DURYODHANA WITH ENVY."



"AS EXPECTED, DURVASA CAME ONE DAY WITH HUNDREDS OF HIS FOLLOWERS TO HASTINAPURA."



"DURYODHANA RECEIVED HIM COURTEOUSLY AND LOOKED AFTER HIS EVERY NEED."



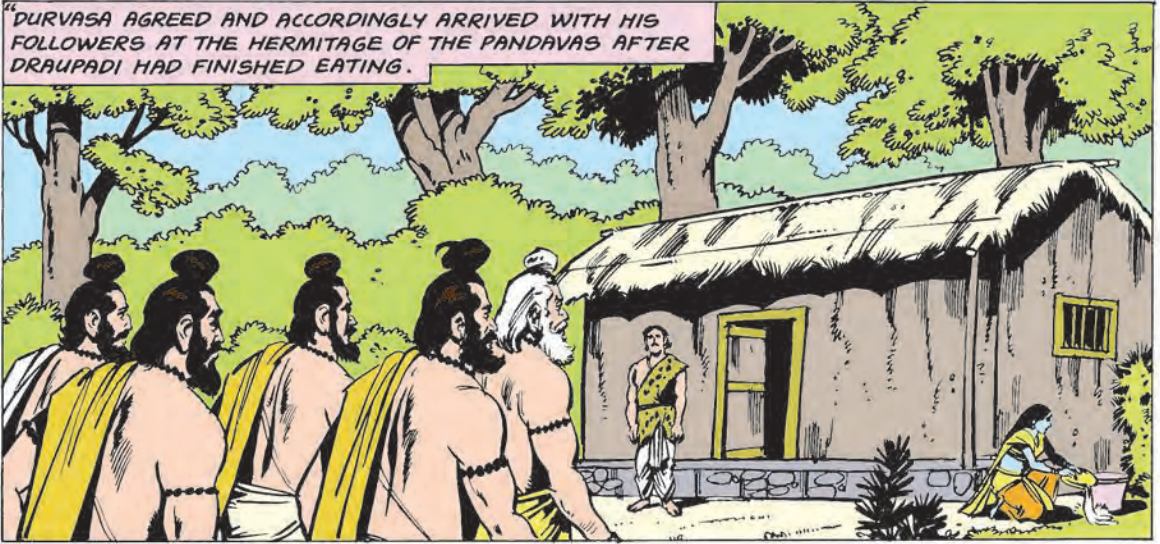
"DURYODHANA FED THE SAGE AND HIS FOLLOWERS. PLEASED WITH HIS LAVISH HOSPITALITY, DURVASA SAID —"



"DURYODHANA SAID —"



"DURVASA AGREED AND ACCORDINGLY ARRIVED WITH HIS FOLLOWERS AT THE HERMITAGE OF THE PANDAVAS AFTER DRAUPADI HAD FINISHED EATING."



"YUDHISHTHIRA RECEIVED THE SAGE WITH DUE HONOUR —"

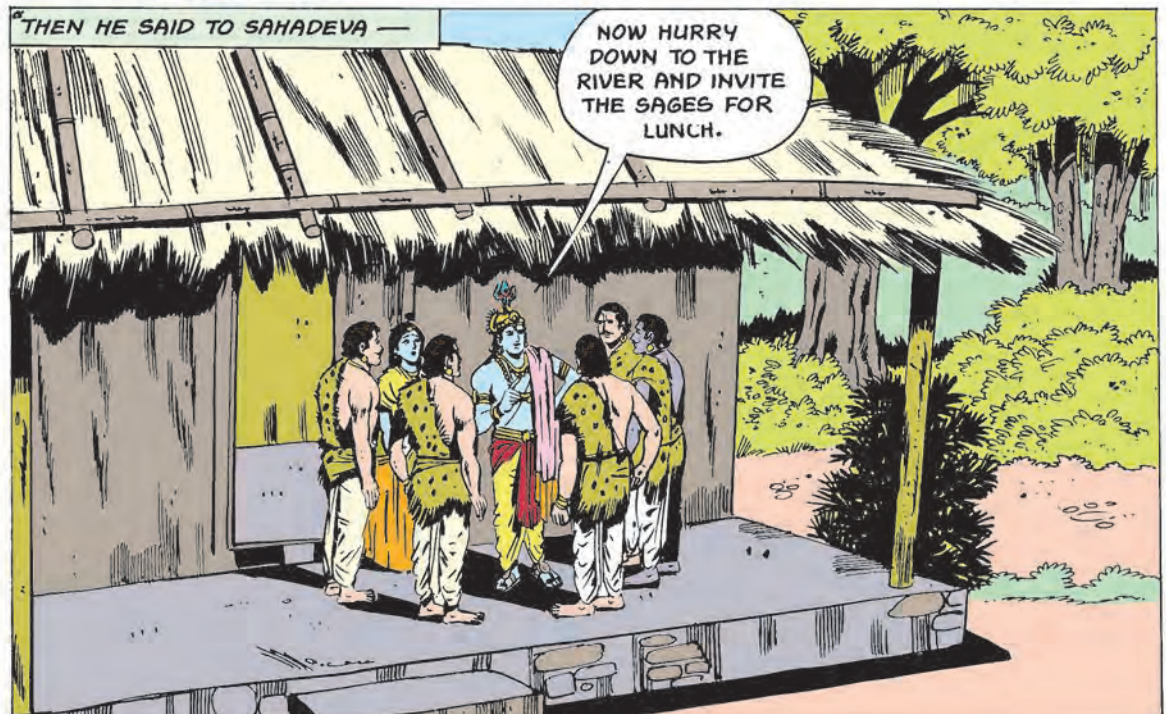
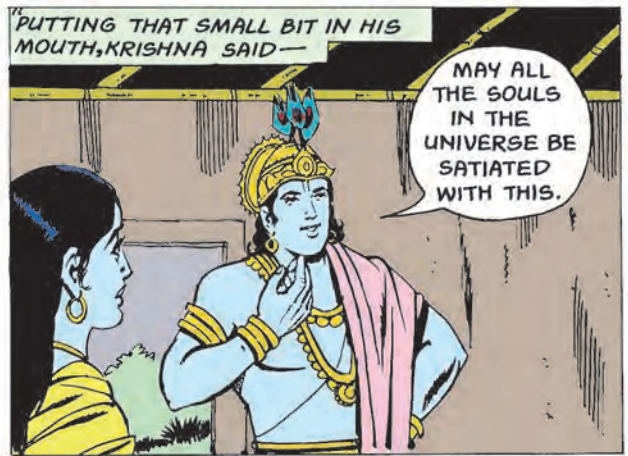


"DRAUPADI FELT HELPLESS AND IN HER DESPAIR PRAYED TO THE LORD."



"JUST THEN KRISHNA APPEARED —"





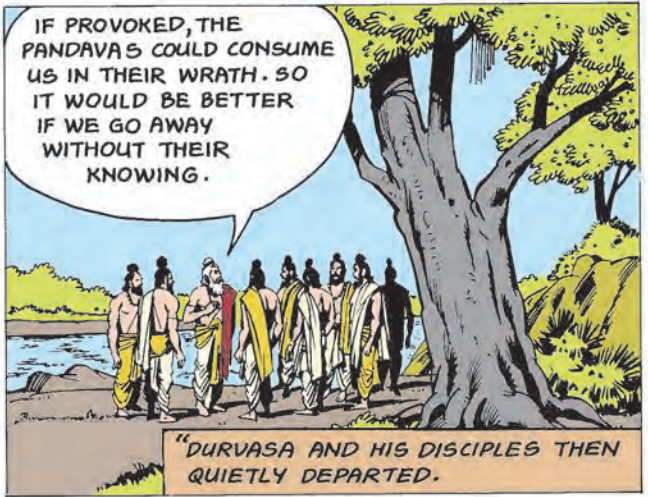
"MEANWHILE THE RISHI AND HIS DISCIPLES BATHING IN THE RIVER SUDDENLY REALISED THAT THEY DID NOT FEEL HUNGRY ANY MORE."



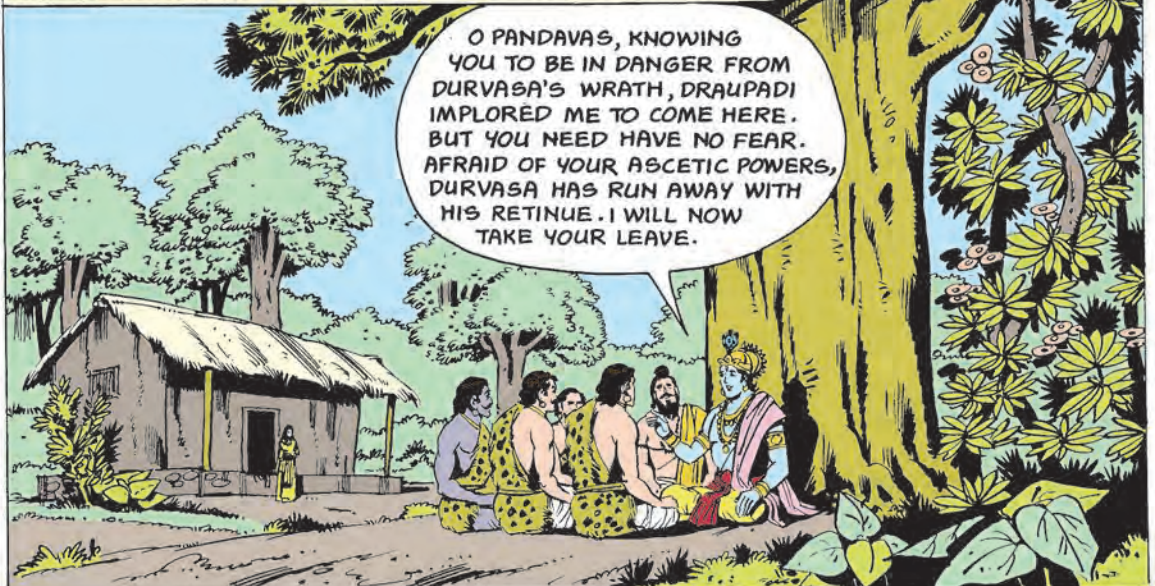
"DURVASA WAS WORRIED."

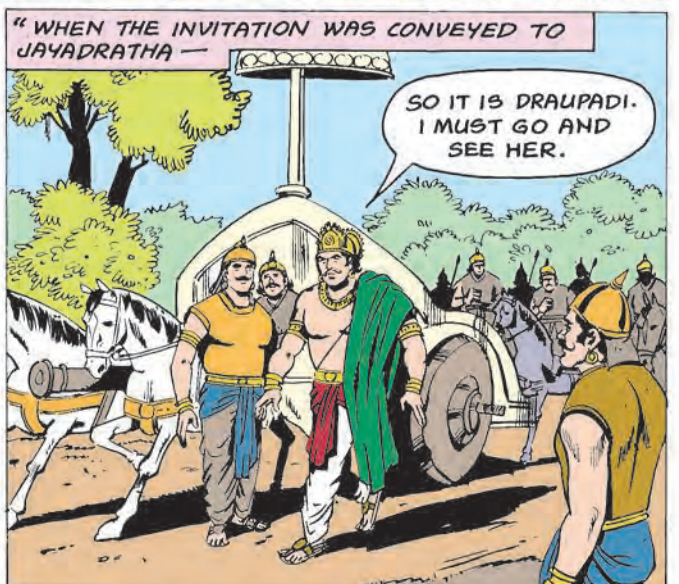
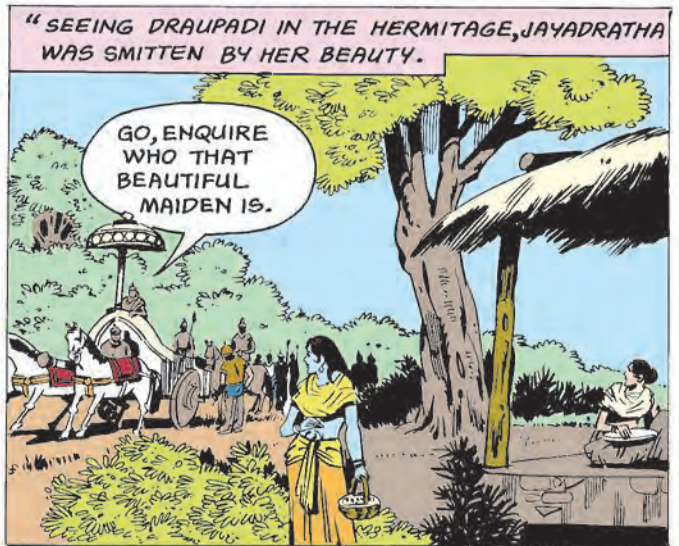
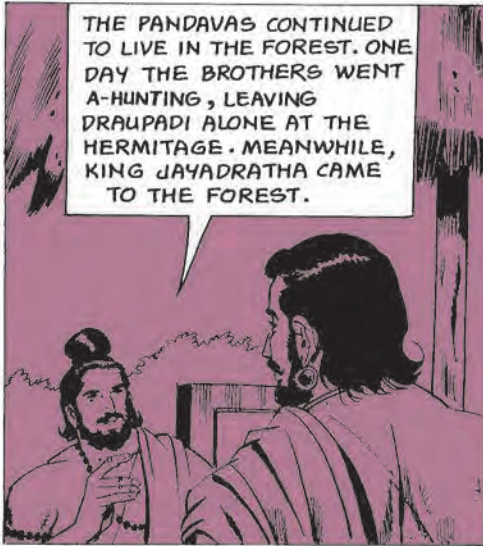


IF PROVOKED, THE PANDAVAS COULD CONSUME US IN THEIR WRATH. SO IT WOULD BE BETTER IF WE GO AWAY WITHOUT THEIR KNOWING.

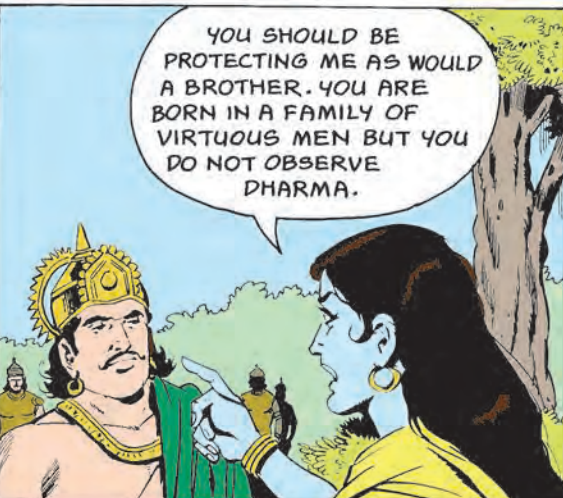
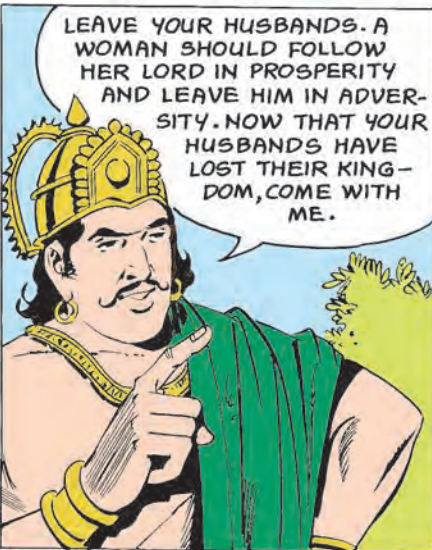
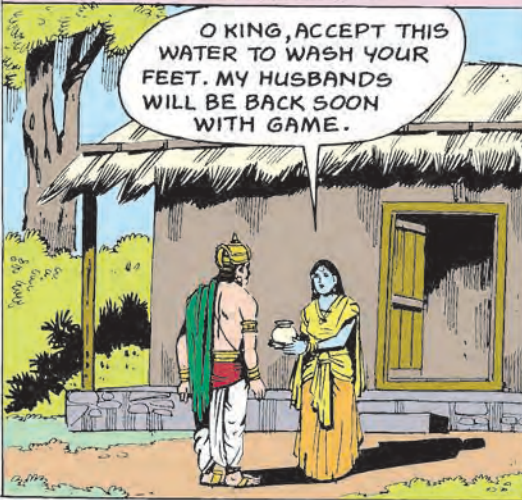


"AT THE HERMITAGE KRISHNA EXPLAINED TO THE PANDAVAS WHO WERE AWAITING DURVASA AND THE OTHER RISHIS —"





"DRAUPADI RECEIVED JAYADRATHA WITH THE COURTESY DUE TO A KING."

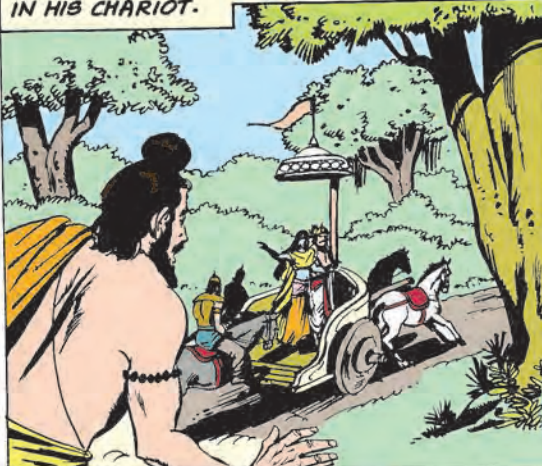




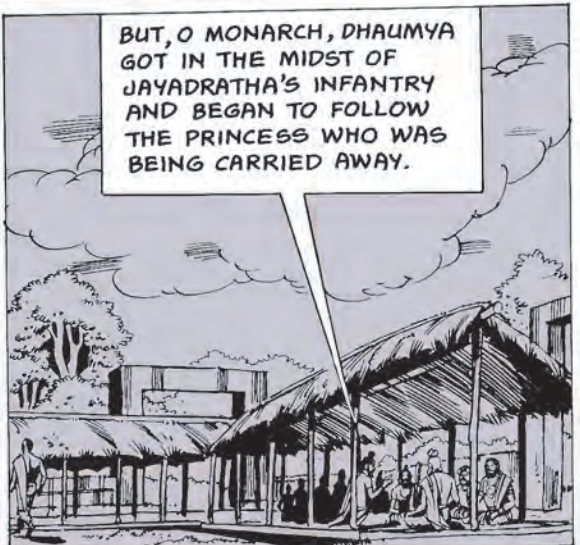
"SAGE DHAUMYA RUSHED IN AND SAID —



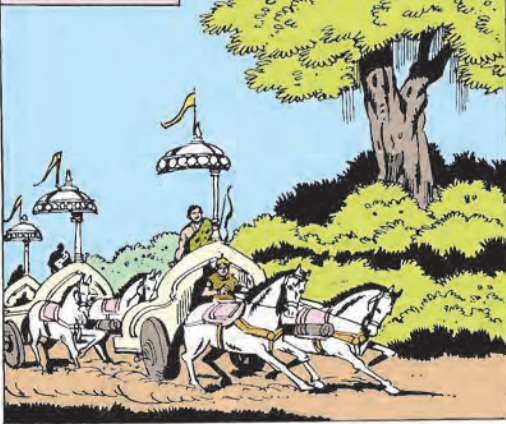
"DISREGARDING THE WORDS OF DHAUMYA, JAYADRATHA DROVE AWAY WITH DRAUPADI IN HIS CHARIOT.



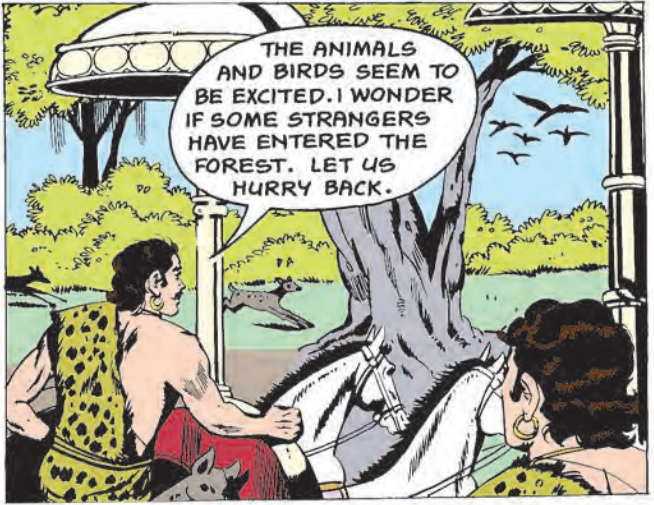
BUT, O MONARCH, DHAUMYA GOT IN THE MIDST OF JAYADRATHA'S INFANTRY AND BEGAN TO FOLLOW THE PRINCESS WHO WAS BEING CARRIED AWAY.



"THE PANDAVAS, IN THE MEANWHILE, WERE ON THEIR WAY BACK FROM THE HUNT."



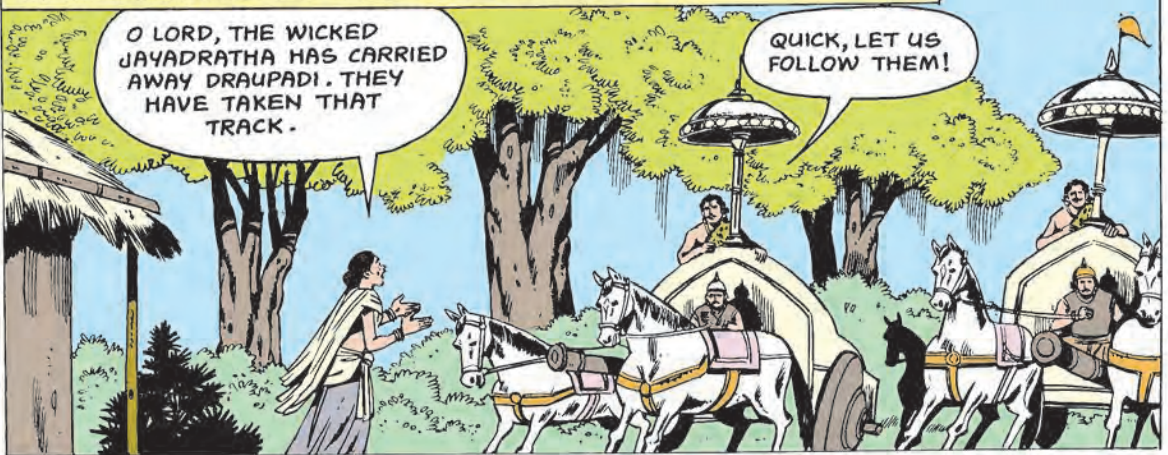
THE ANIMALS AND BIRDS SEEM TO BE EXCITED. I WONDER IF SOME STRANGERS HAVE ENTERED THE FOREST. LET US HURRY BACK.



"AT THE HERMITAGE THE PANDAVAS FOUND DRAUPADI'S MAID WEeping."

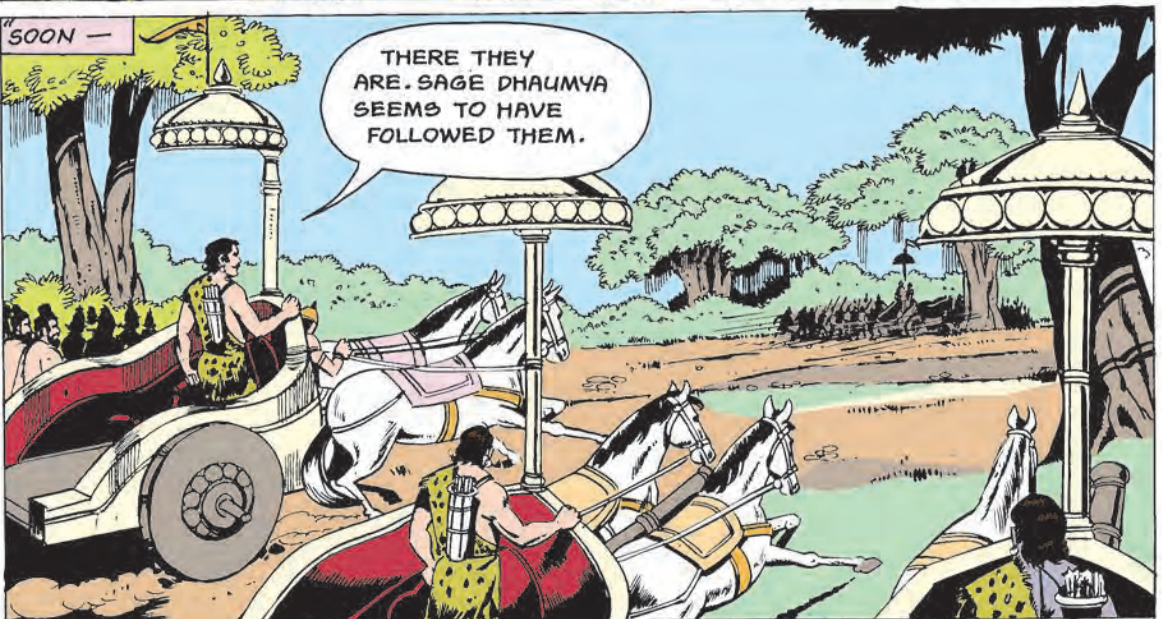
O LORD, THE WICKED JAYADRATHA HAS CARRIED AWAY DRAUPADI. THEY HAVE TAKEN THAT TRACK.

QUICK, LET US FOLLOW THEM!



"SOON —

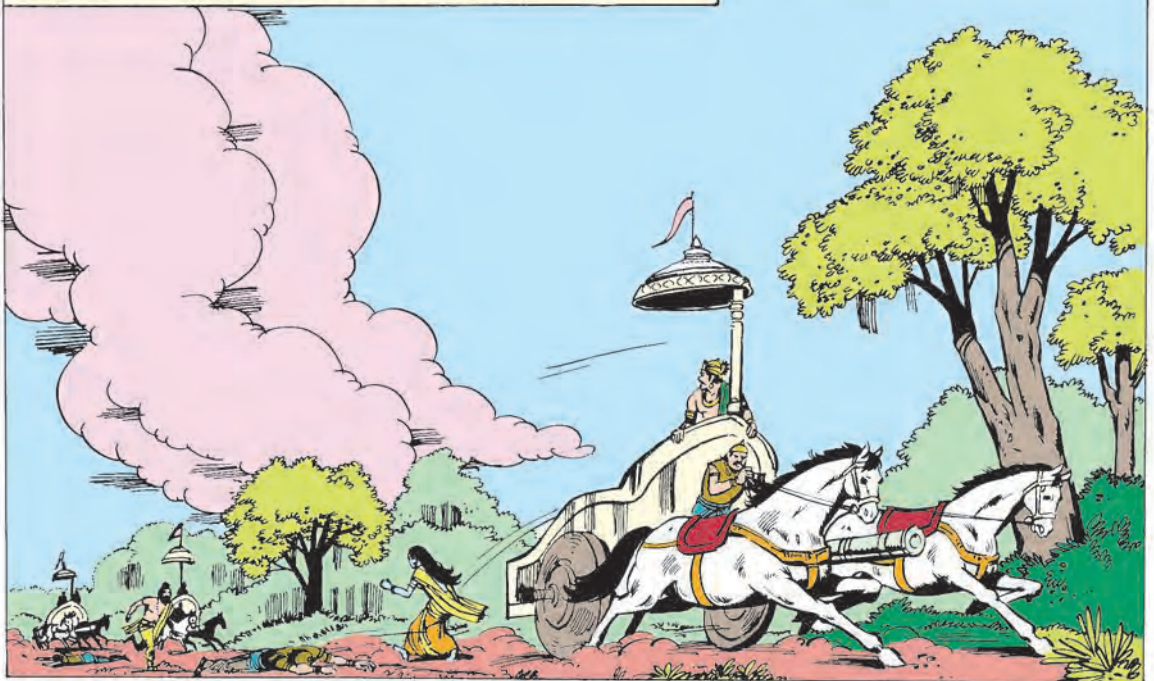
THERE THEY ARE. SAGE DHAUMYA SEEMS TO HAVE FOLLOWED THEM.

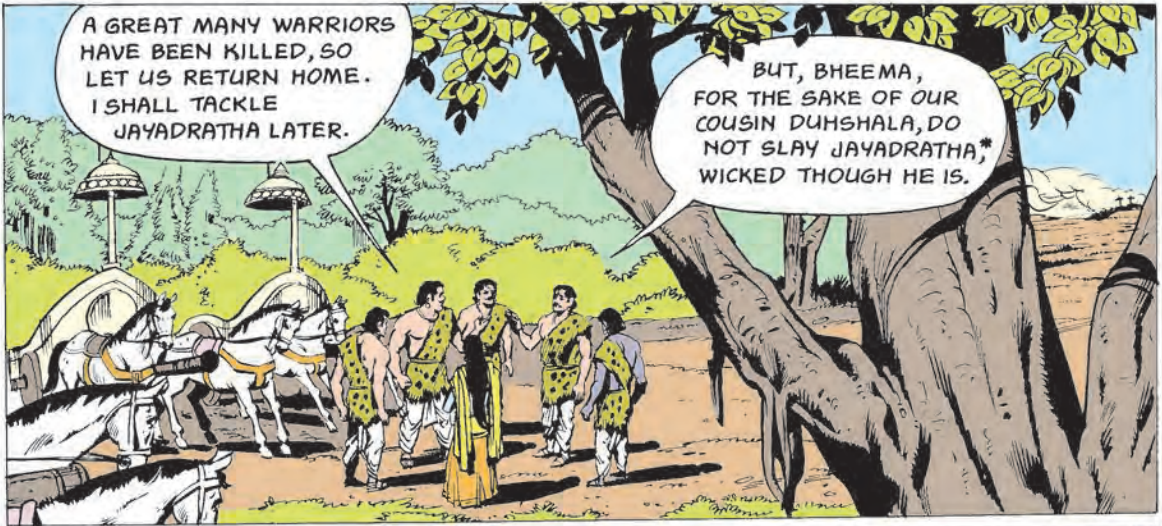


"IN THE FIGHT THAT FOLLOWED, THE PANDAVAS WERE ABLE TO SCATTER JAYADRATHA'S MEN."

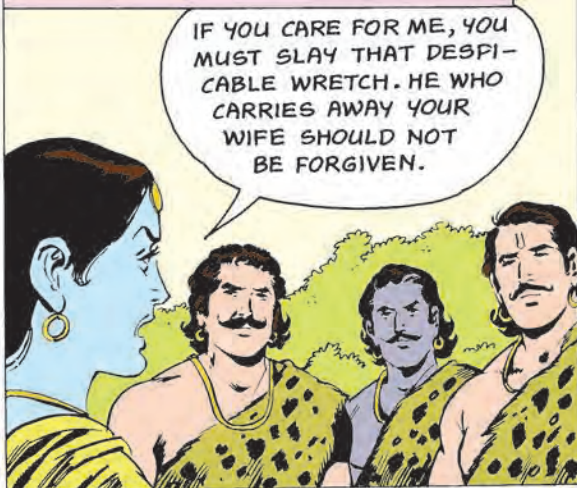


"EVEN JAYADRATHA FLED LEAVING DRAUPADI BEHIND."

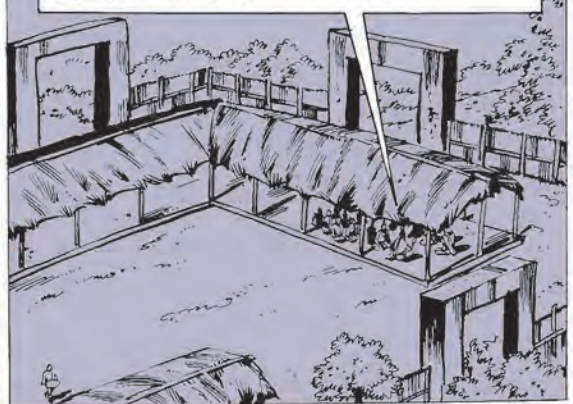




"BUT AN INDIGNANT DRAUPADI SAID —



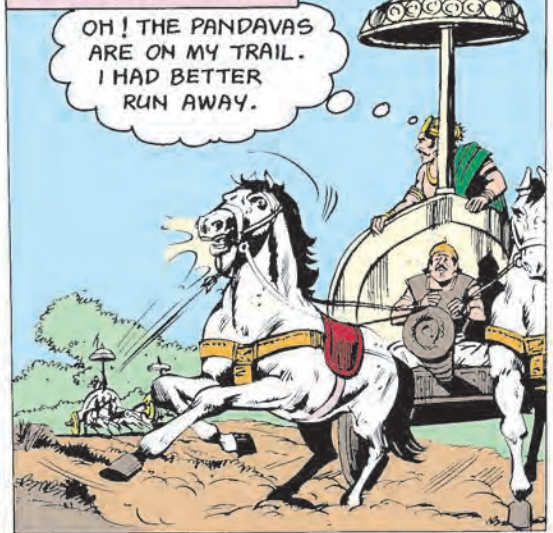
THUS ADMONISHED BY DRAUPADI, BHEEMA AND ARJUNA WENT IN SEARCH OF JAYADRATHA, WHILE THE OTHERS RETURNED TO THE HERMITAGE.



"BHEEMA AND ARJUNA SET OUT IN PURSUIT OF THEIR ENEMY, WHO RODE ON UNAWARES.



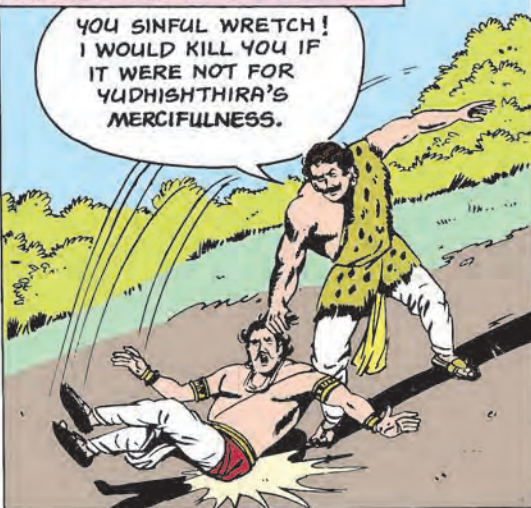
"WHEN SUDDENLY —



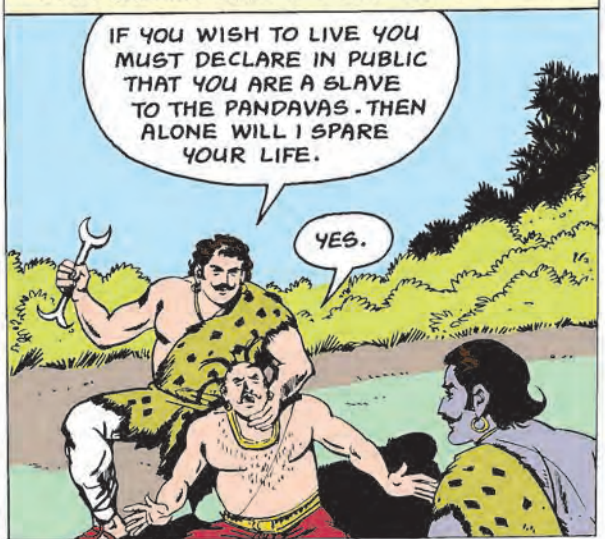
* JAYADRATHA WAS THE HUSBAND OF DUHSHALA, DURYODHANA'S SISTER.



"BHEEMA SEIZED HIM BY HIS HAIR AND KNOCKED HIM TO THE GROUND."



"THEN BHEEMA SHAVED JAYADRATHA'S HEAD."



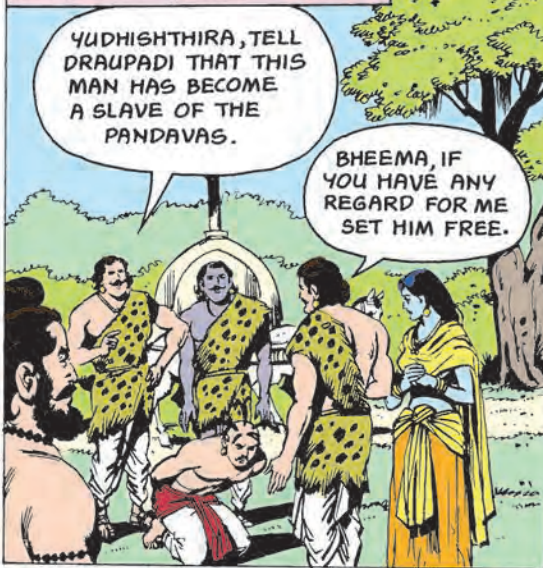
"THEN BHEEMA AND ARJUNA SECURED JAYADRATHA IN CHAINS AND FLUNG HIM INTO A CHARIOT..."



"... AND DROVE BACK TO THE HERMITAGE."



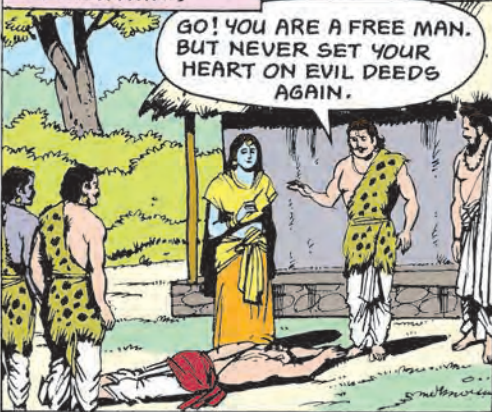
"THROWING JAYADRATHA AT YUDHISH-
THIRA'S FEET, BHEEMA SAID —



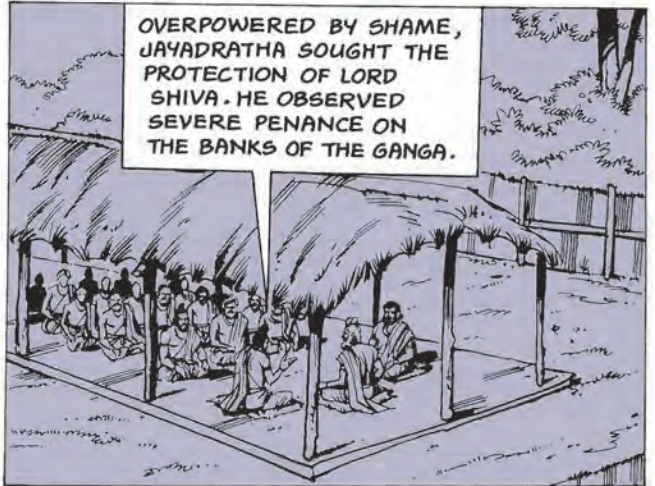
"DRAUPADI TOO SAID —



"JAYADRATHA WAS UNCHAINED. AS HE
PROSTRATED HIMSELF BEFORE
YUDHISHTHIRA —

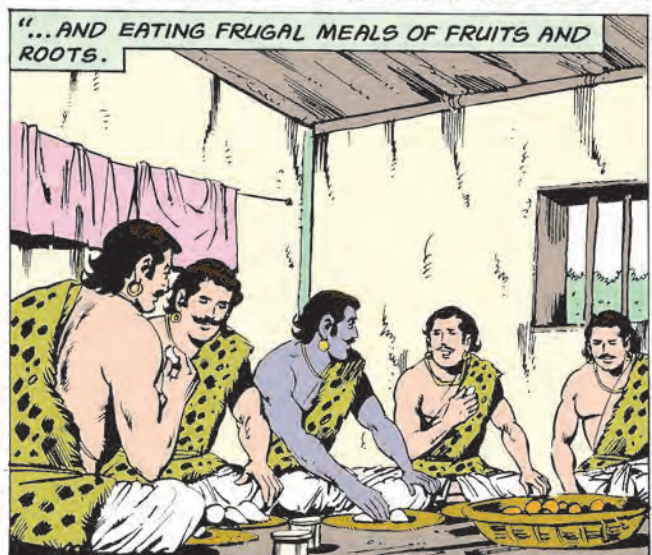
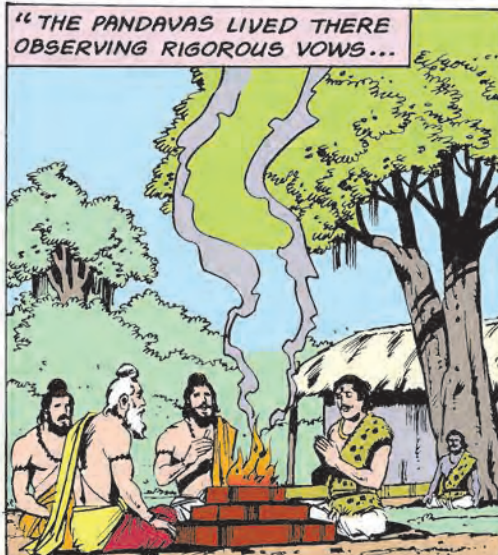
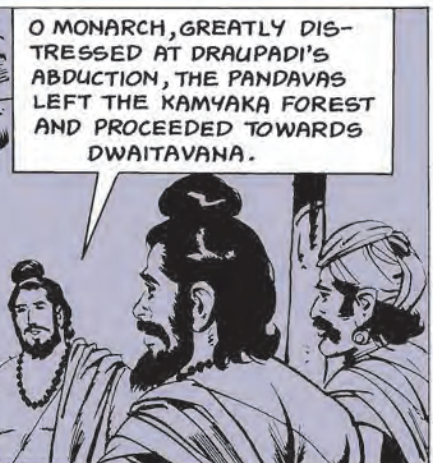
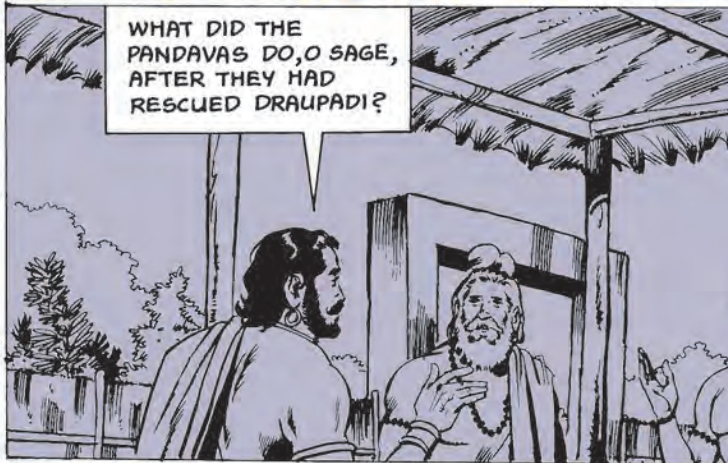
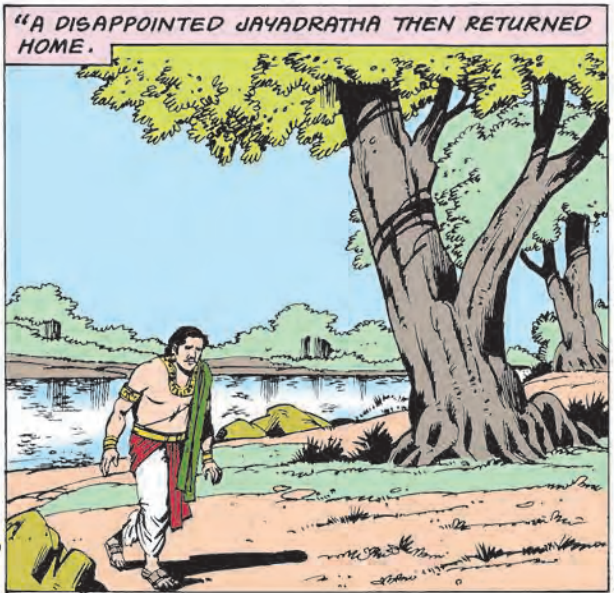
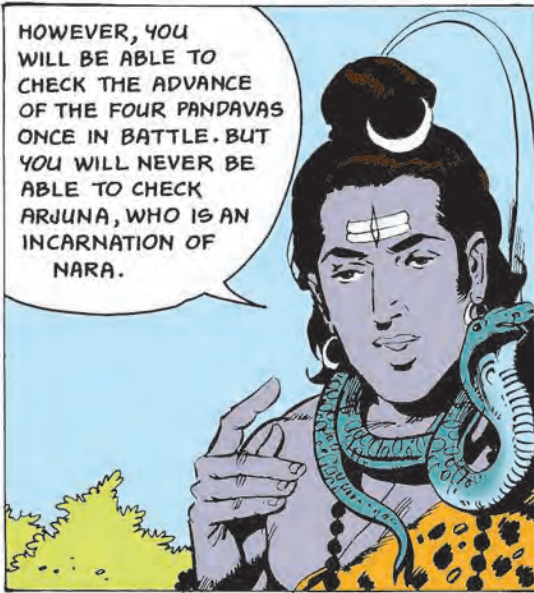


OVERPOWERED BY SHAME,
JAYADRATHA SOUGHT THE
PROTECTION OF LORD
SHIVA. HE OBSERVED
SEVERE PENANCE ON
THE BANKS OF THE GANGA.



"FINALLY ONE DAY SHIVA APPEARED
BEFORE JAYADRATHA.

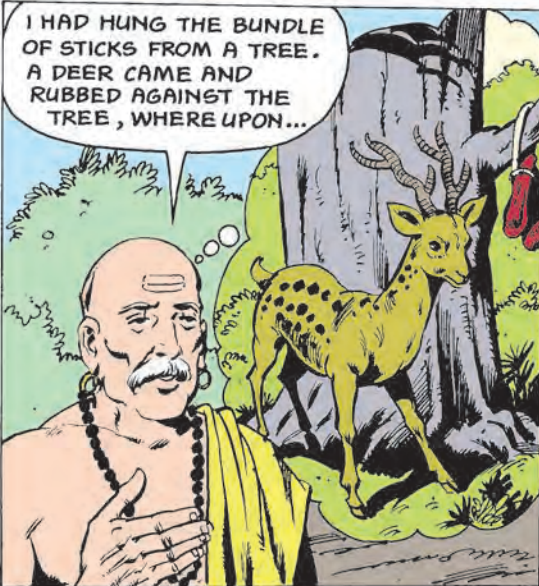




* ONE DAY, WHILE THE PANDAVAS WERE DWELLING IN THE FOREST, A BRAHMANA APPROACHED YUDHISHTHIRA FOR HELP.



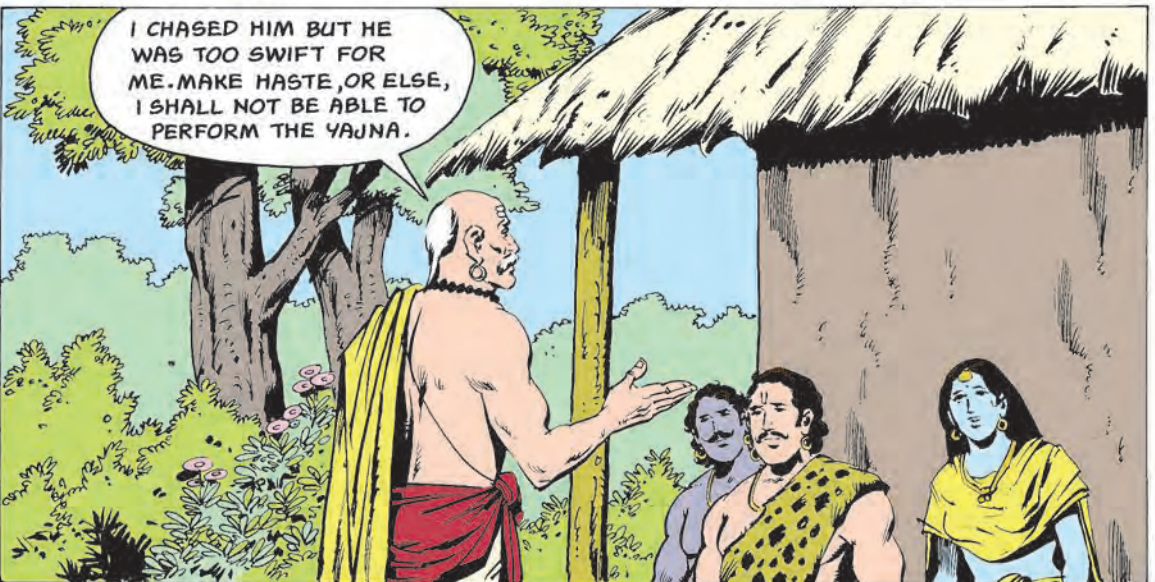
O KING! A DEER HAS ROMPED AWAY WITH MY SHAMI STICKS*. I WOULD LIKE YOU TO RETRIEVE THEM FOR ME.



I HAD HUNG THE BUNDLE OF STICKS FROM A TREE. A DEER CAME AND RUBBED AGAINST THE TREE, WHERE UPON...



...THE STICKS GOT ENTANGLED IN HIS ANTLERS AND HE FLED.



I CHASED HIM BUT HE WAS TOO SWIFT FOR ME. MAKE HASTE, OR ELSE, I SHALL NOT BE ABLE TO PERFORM THE YAJNA.

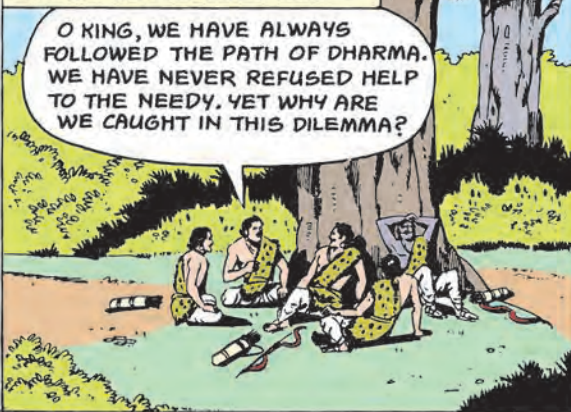
* THE SHAMI STICKS WHEN RUBBED AGAINST EACH OTHER SET OFF SPARKS, WHICH LIGHT THE SACRIFICIAL FIRES.

"YUDHISHTHIRA WAS DISTRESSED ON HEARING THIS ACCOUNT. HE AND HIS BROTHERS SET OUT IN PURSUIT OF THE DEER, BUT TO NO AVAIL."

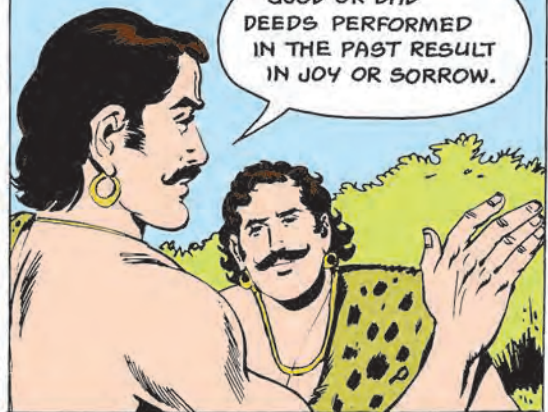


"FINALLY THE PANDAVAS SAT DOWN IN DESPAIR AND NAKULA SAID —

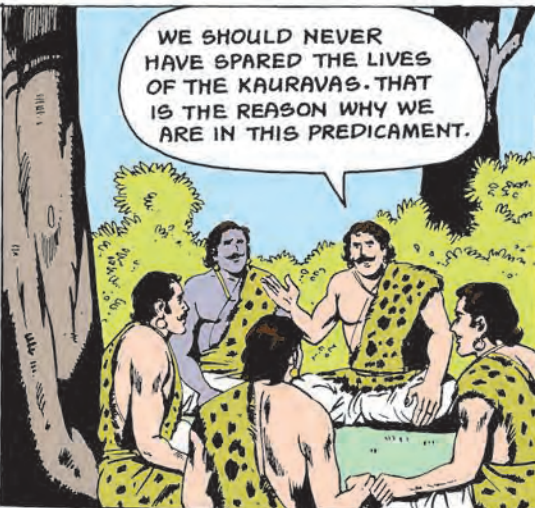
O KING, WE HAVE ALWAYS FOLLOWED THE PATH OF DHARMA. WE HAVE NEVER REFUSED HELP TO THE NEEDY. YET WHY ARE WE CAUGHT IN THIS DILEMMA?



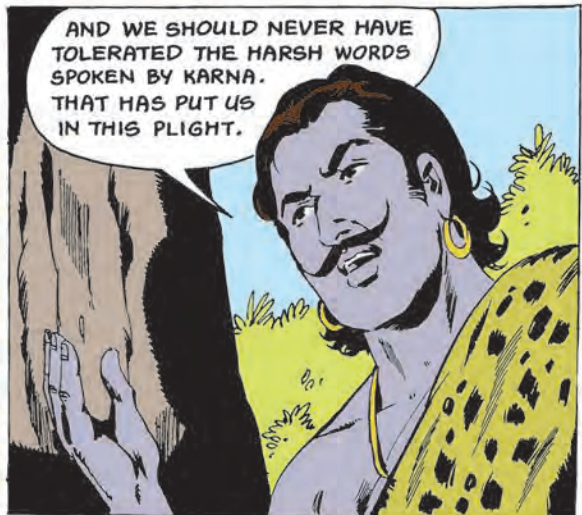
GOOD OR BAD DEEDS PERFORMED IN THE PAST RESULT IN JOY OR SORROW.



WE SHOULD NEVER HAVE SPARED THE LIVES OF THE KAURAVAS. THAT IS THE REASON WHY WE ARE IN THIS PREDICAMENT.



AND WE SHOULD NEVER HAVE TOLERATED THE HARSH WORDS SPOKEN BY KARNA. THAT HAS PUT US IN THIS PLIGHT.



"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

YOUR BROTHERS
ARE TIRED AND THIRSTY.
NAKULA, CLIMB UP THIS
TREE, LOOK AROUND AND
SEE IF THERE IS A LAKE OR
A STREAM NEARBY.

ALL RIGHT.

"WHEN NAKULA GOT UP THE TREE —

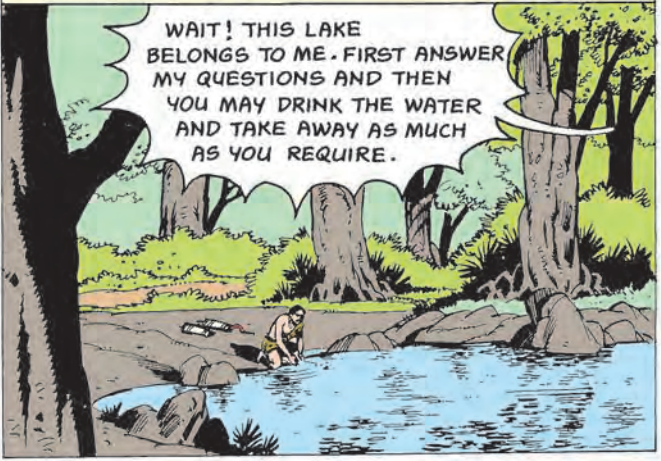
I SEE OVER THERE TREES THAT
GROW ONLY BY THE WATER SIDE.
I ALSO HEAR THE CRIES OF
CRANES. SO THERE MUST
SURELY BE WATER AROUND.

GOOD. COME
DOWN, AND THEN
FETCH US SOME WATER
IN THESE QUIVERS.

"NAKULA HURRIED TOWARDS THE LAKE.



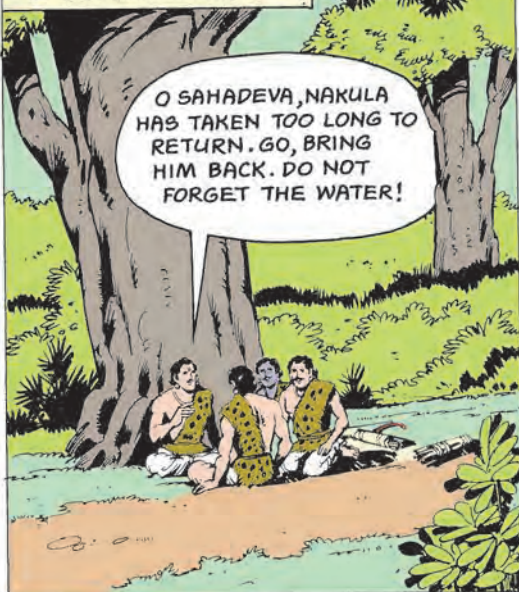
"AT THE LAKE AS HE BENT OVER TO QUENCH HIS THIRST—



"DISREGARDING THE VOICE, NAKULA DRANK THE WATER. NO SOONER HAD HE DONE THAT THAN HE FELL UNCONSCIOUS.



"IN THE MEANWHILE —



"SO SAHADEVA TOO SET OUT IN THE DIRECTION OF THE WATER.



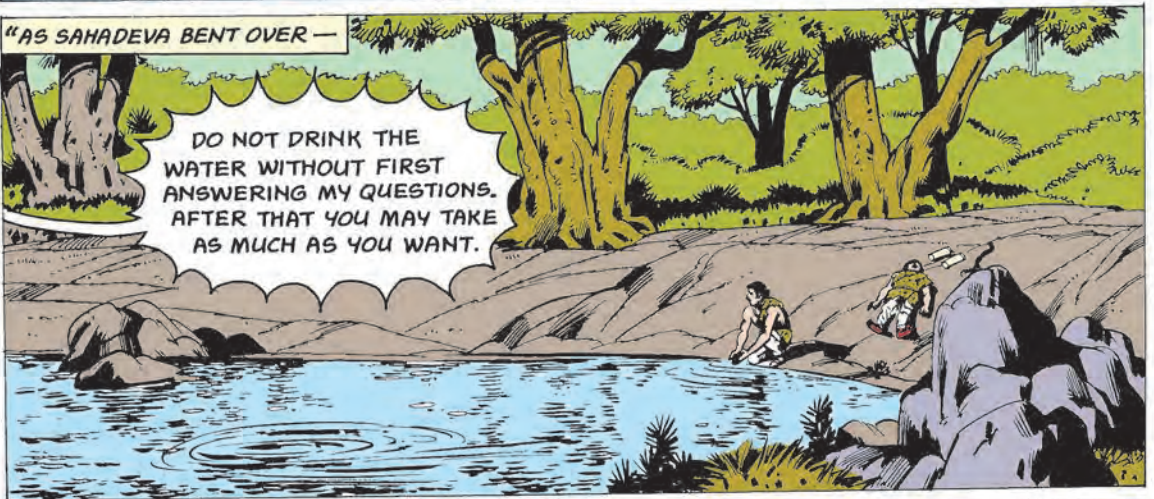
"AT THE LAKE —

NAKULA! NAKULA!
WHAT IS THE MATTER?
HE MUST HAVE DIED OF
THIRST. I HAD BETTER
QUENCH MY THIRST BEFORE
I MEET THE SAME FATE.



"AS SAHADEVA BENT OVER —

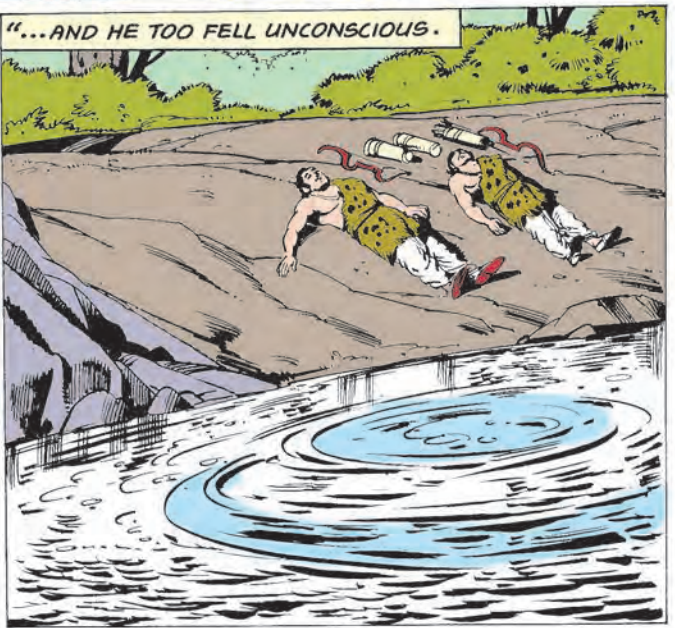
DO NOT DRINK THE
WATER WITHOUT FIRST
ANSWERING MY QUESTIONS.
AFTER THAT YOU MAY TAKE
AS MUCH AS YOU WANT.



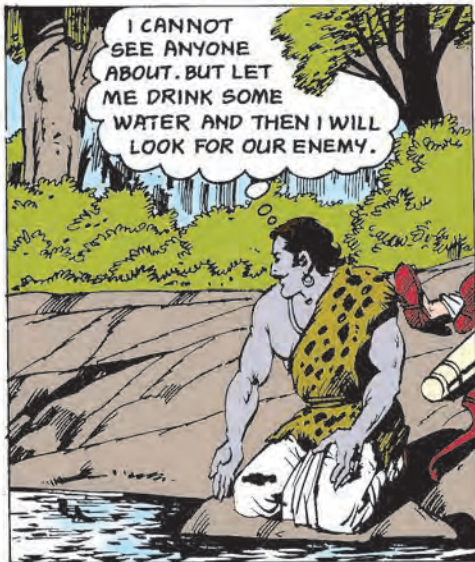
"BUT SAHADEVA DRANK THE
WATER..."



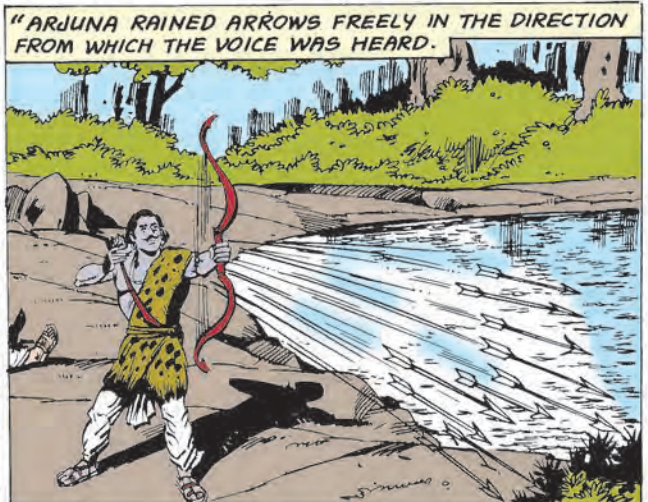
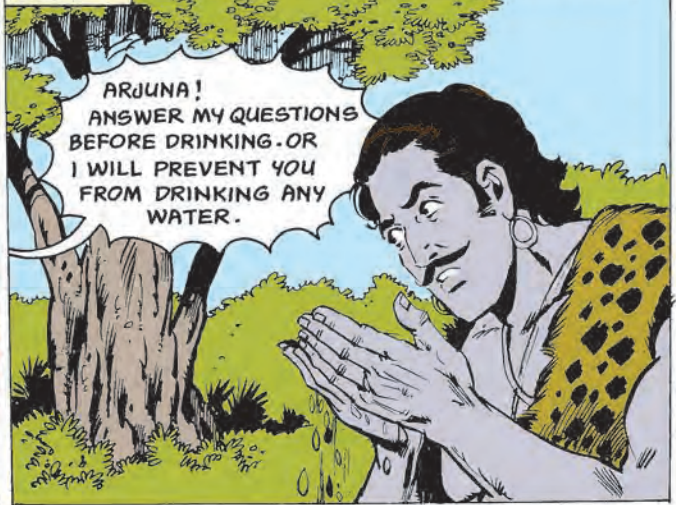
"...AND HE TOO FELL UNCONSCIOUS."



"SO WHEN ARJUNA CAME TO THE LAKE NEXT —

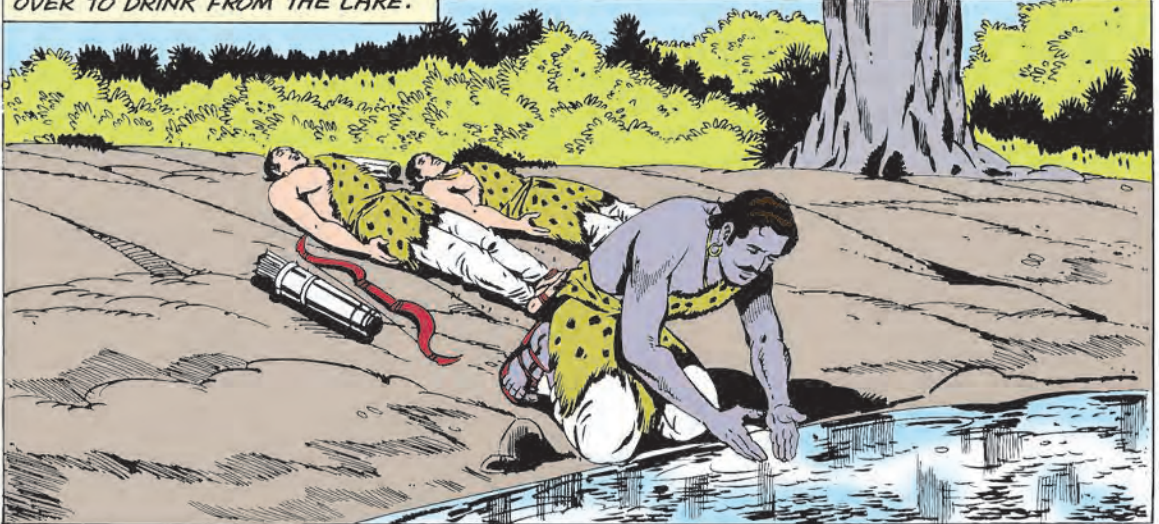


"HE CUPPED HIS HANDS AND TOOK SOME WATER IN IT,
WHEN —





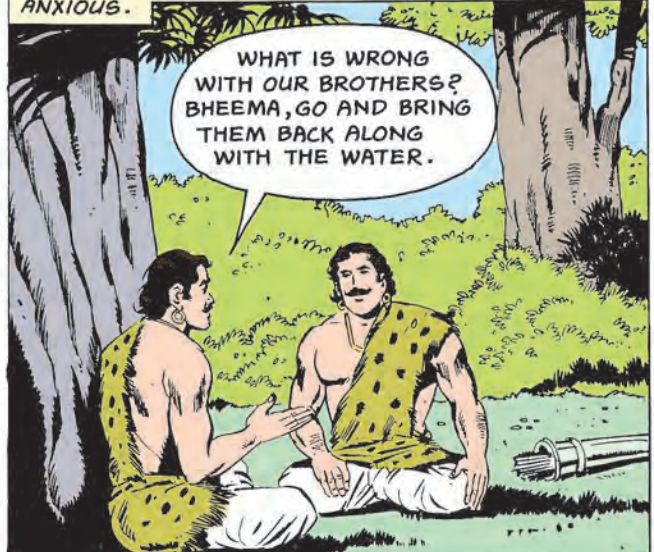
"BUT ARJUNA WAS TIRED AND THIRSTY. DECIDING TO TAKE ACTION LATER, HE TOO BENT OVER TO DRINK FROM THE LAKE.



"AND HE TOO PAID THE SAME PRICE AS HIS BROTHERS.



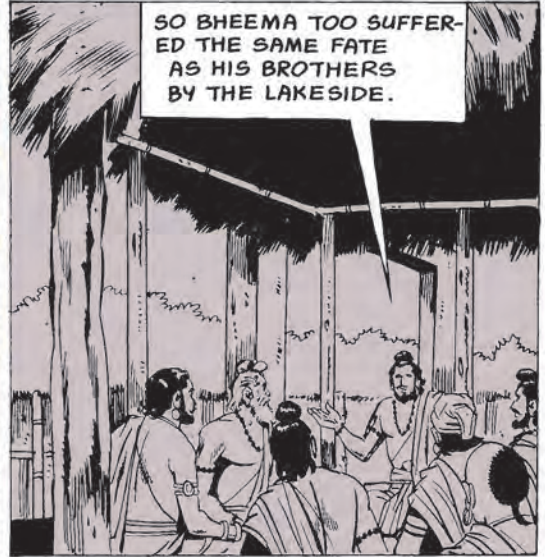
"BACK IN THE FOREST, YUDHISHTHIRA WAS GETTING ANXIOUS.



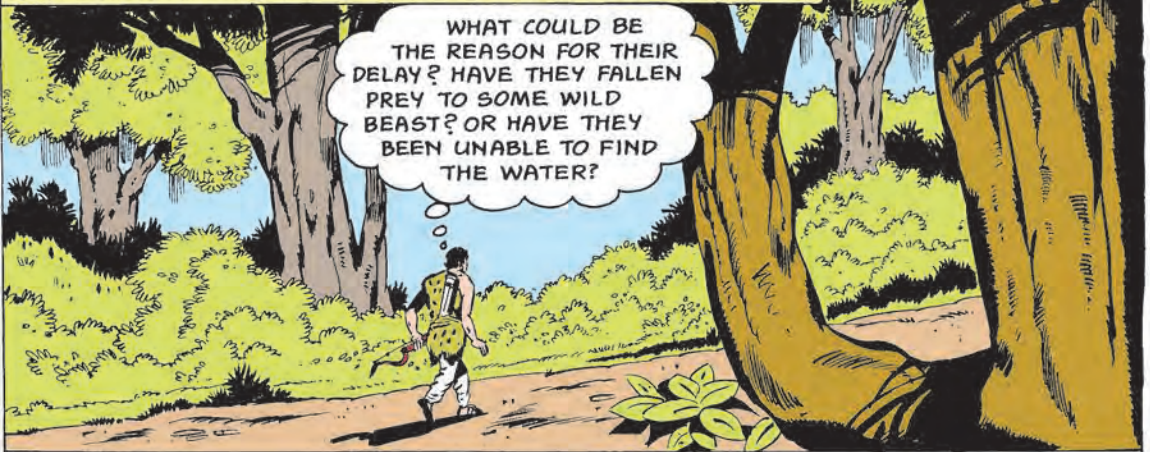
"WHEN BHEEMA REACHED THE LAKE —



SO BHEEMA TOO SUFFERED THE SAME FATE AS HIS BROTHERS BY THE LAKESIDE.



"SOON YUDHISHTHIRA TOO SET OUT LOOKING FOR HIS BROTHERS.



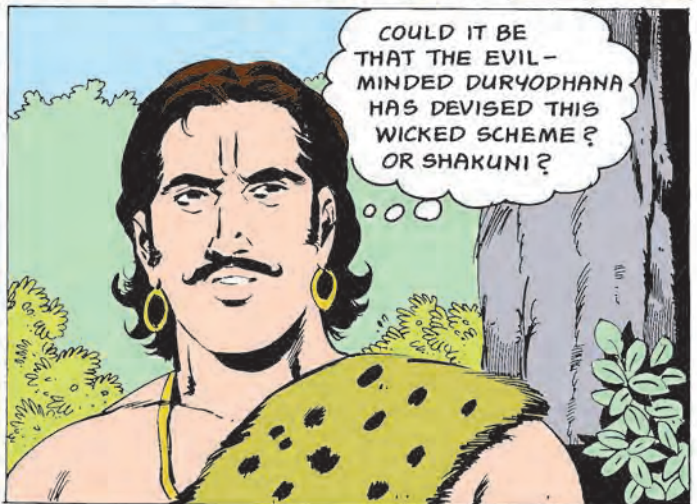
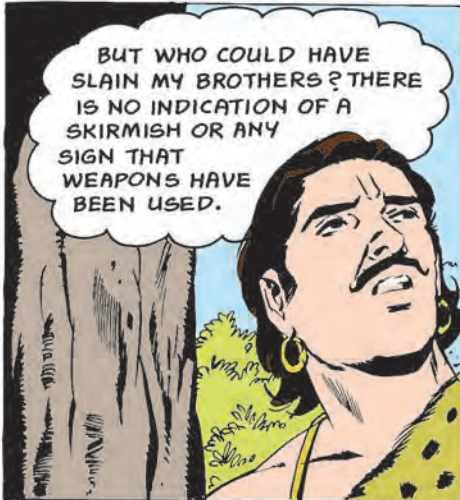
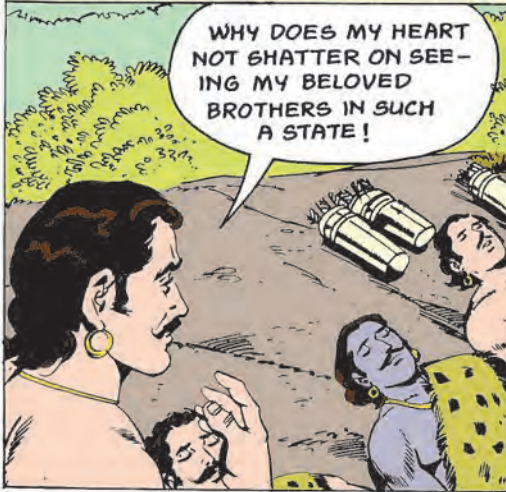
"SUDDENLY —



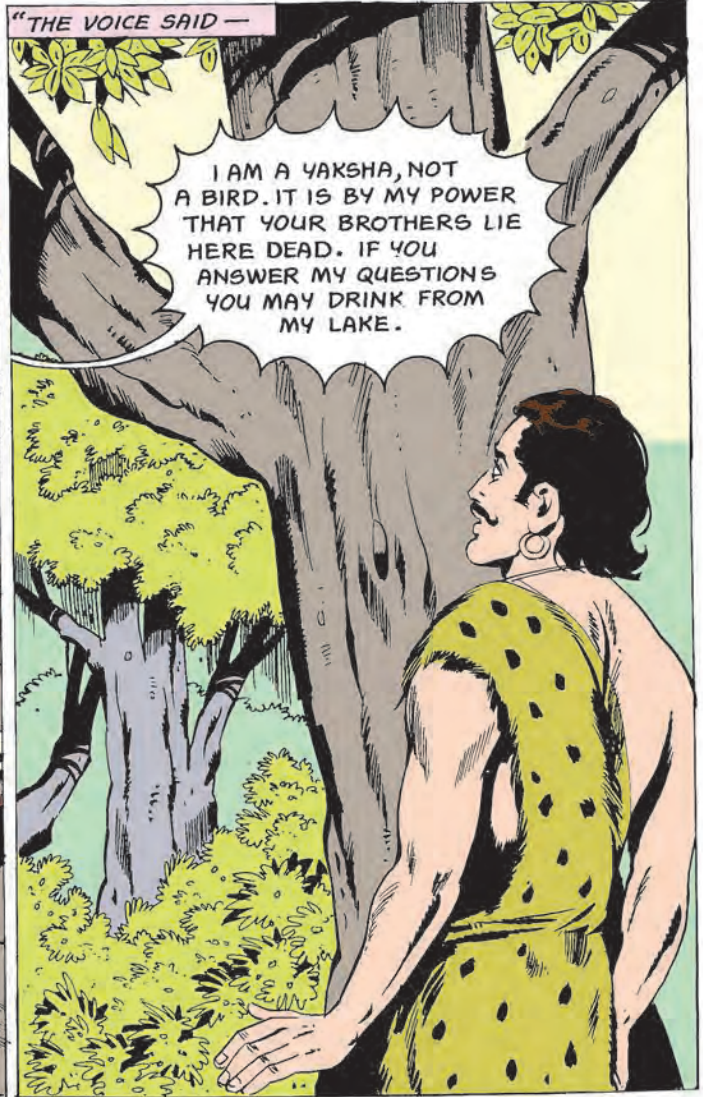
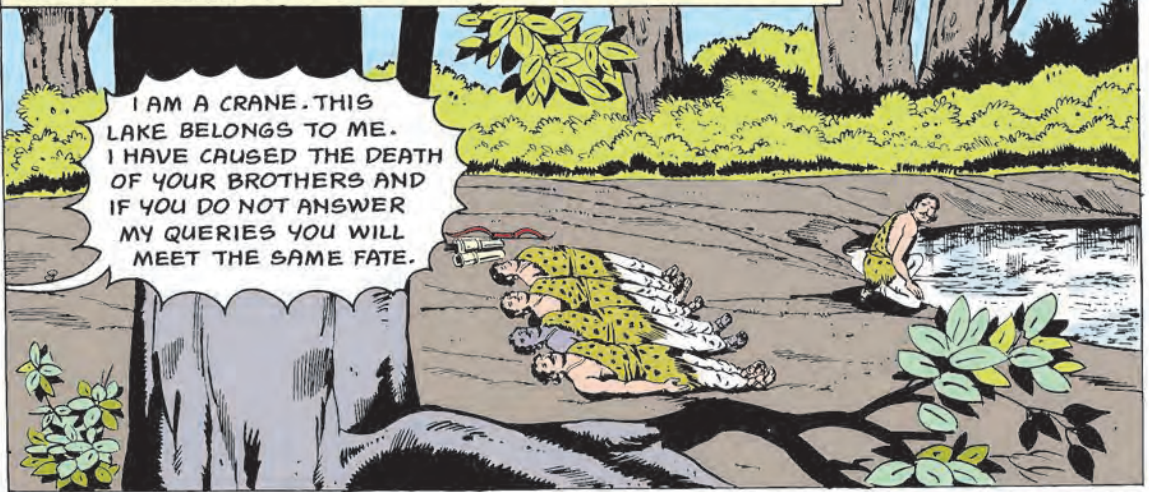
"BUT WHEN HE REACHED THERE —



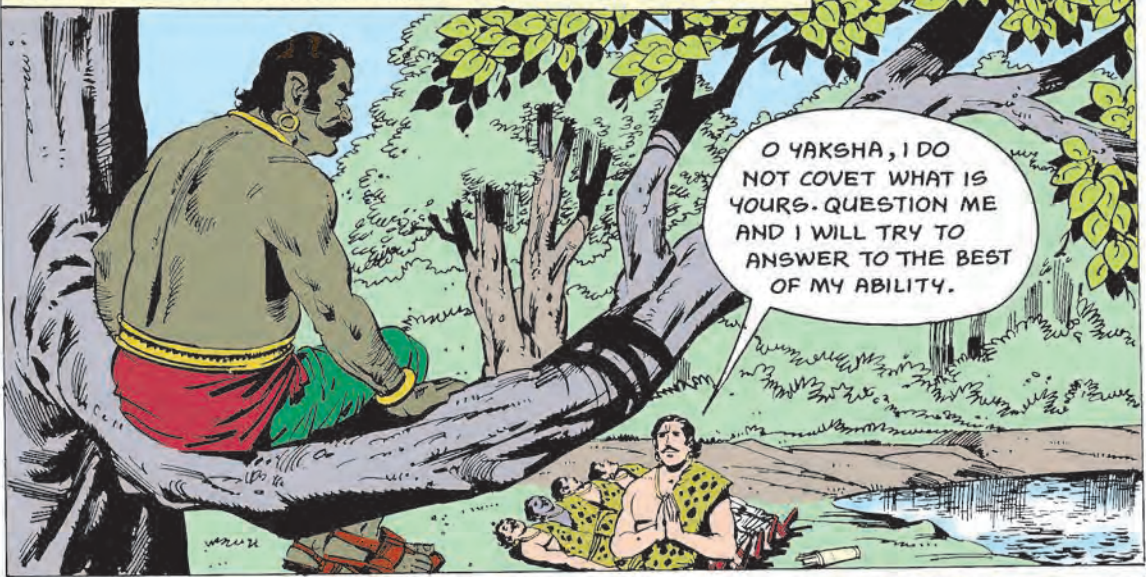
"BEHOLDING HIS BROTHERS LYING DEAD ON THE GROUND, YUDHISHTHIRA LAMENTED —



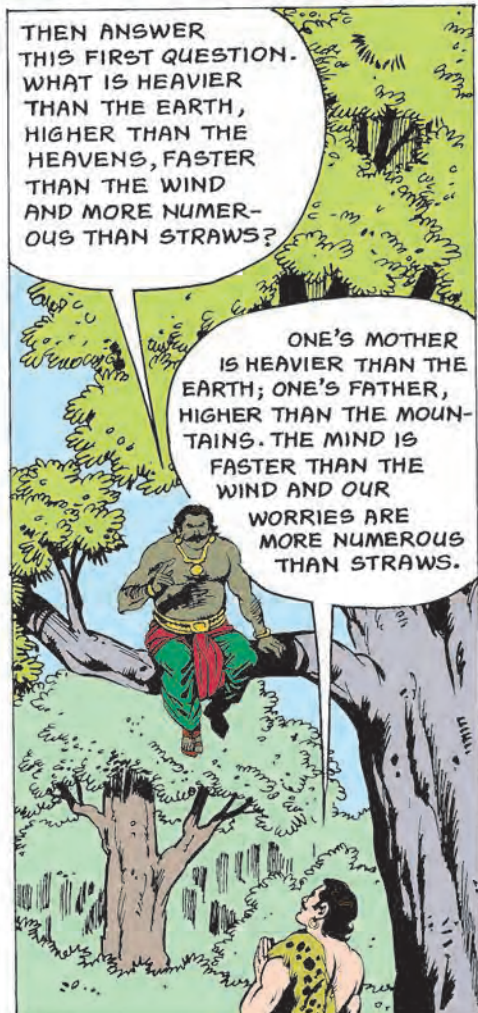
"AS YUDHISHTHIRA DESCENDED TO THE LAKE, HE HEARD A VOICE—



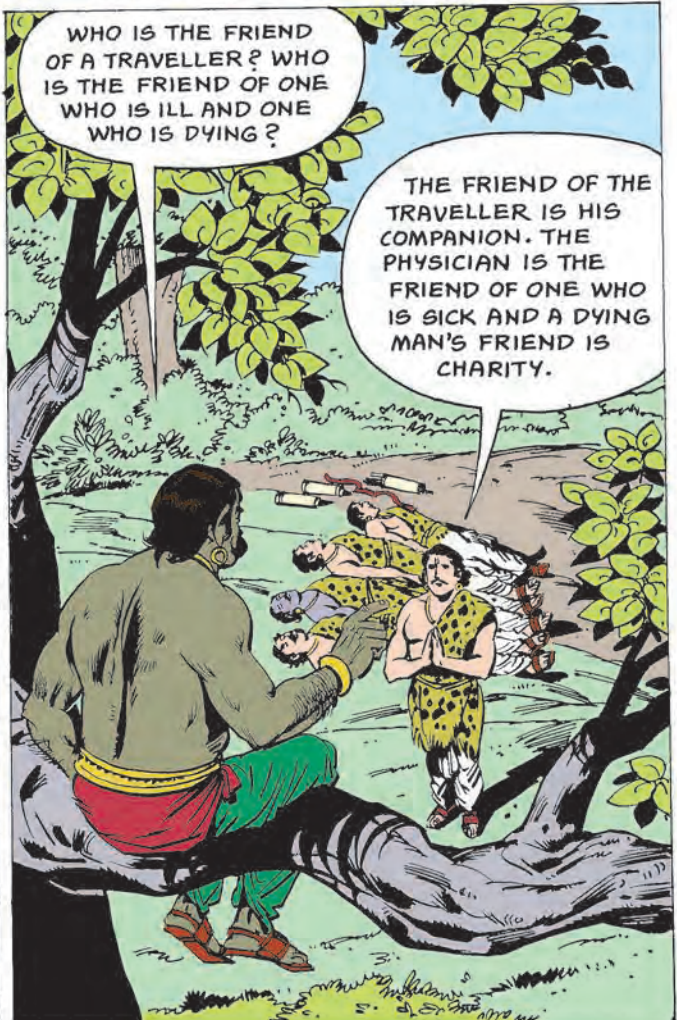
"JUST THEN THE YAKSHA APPEARED IN HIS FEARFUL FORM —

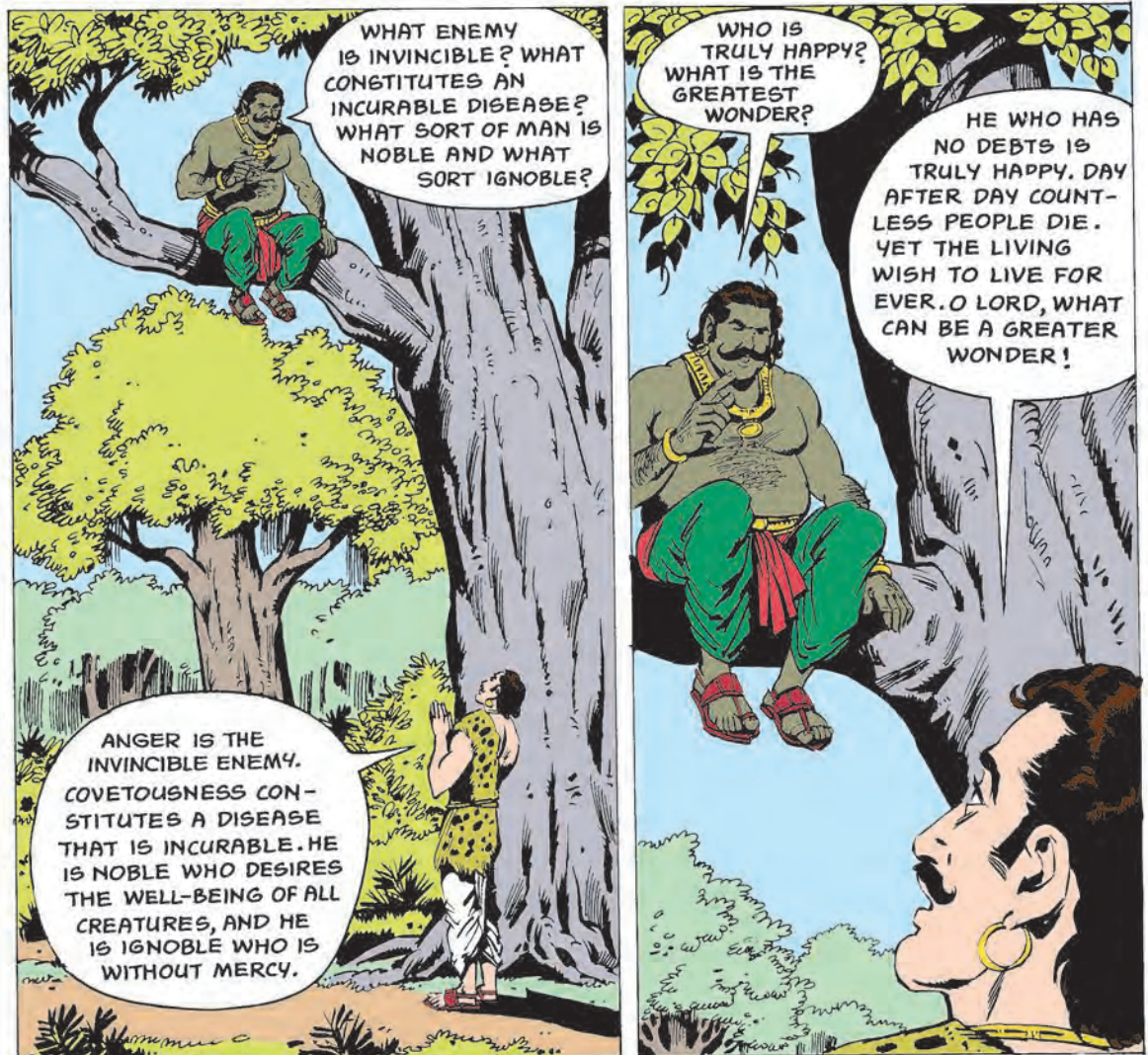


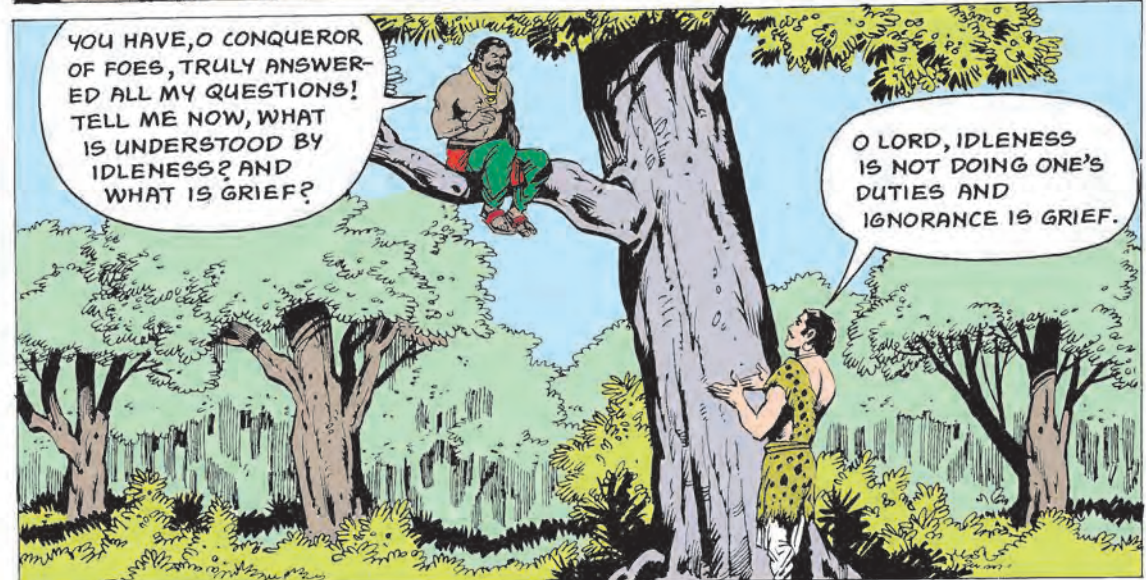
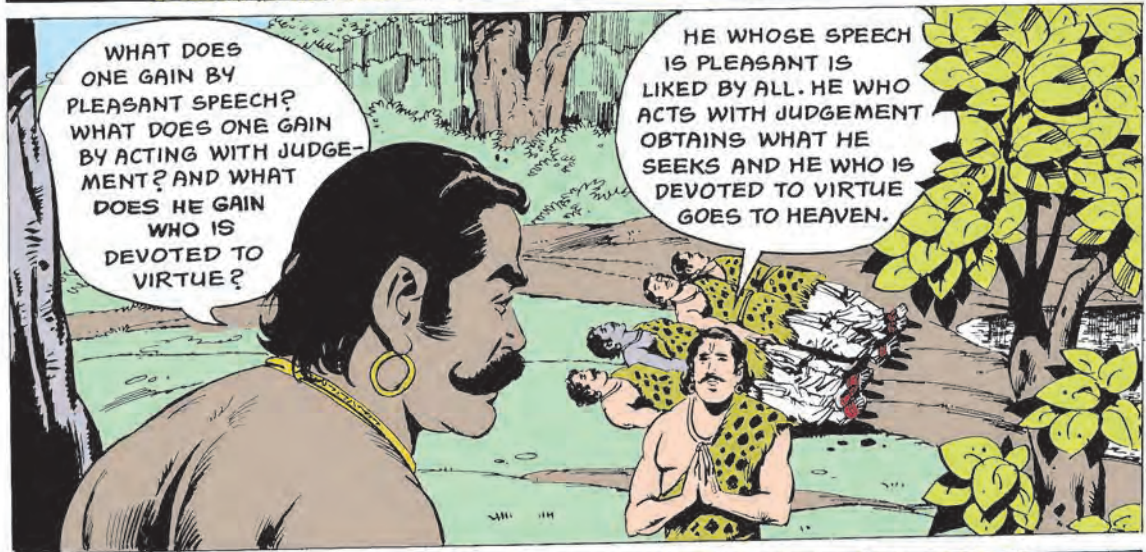
THEN ANSWER THIS FIRST QUESTION. WHAT IS HEAVIER THAN THE EARTH, HIGHER THAN THE HEAVENS, FASTER THAN THE WIND AND MORE NUMEROUS THAN STRAWS?

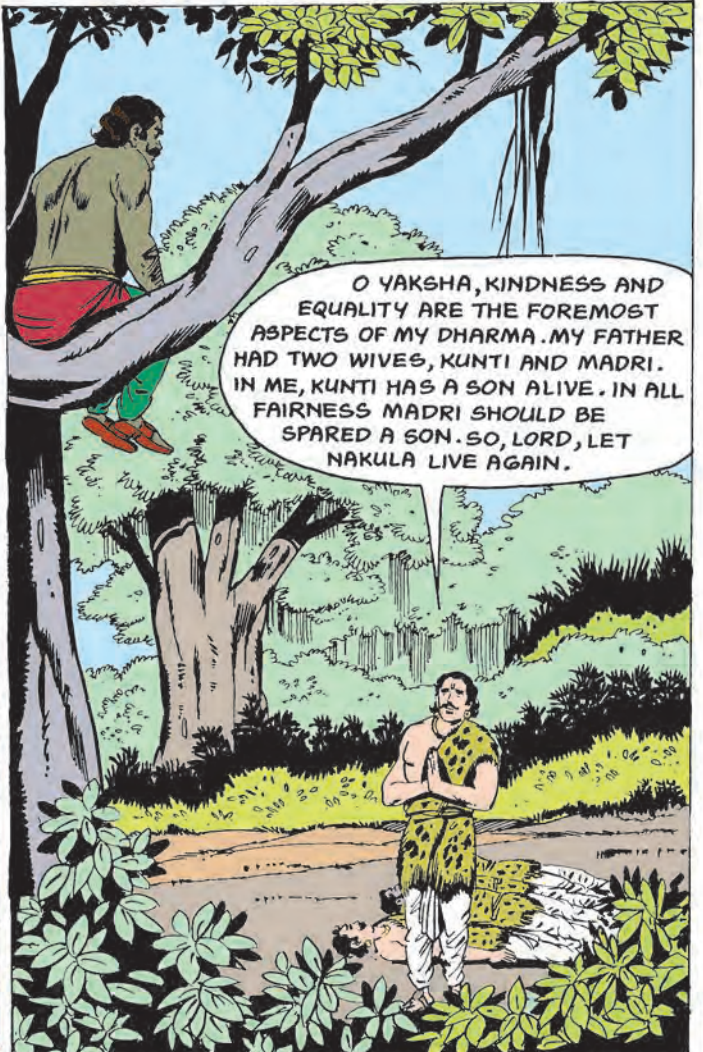
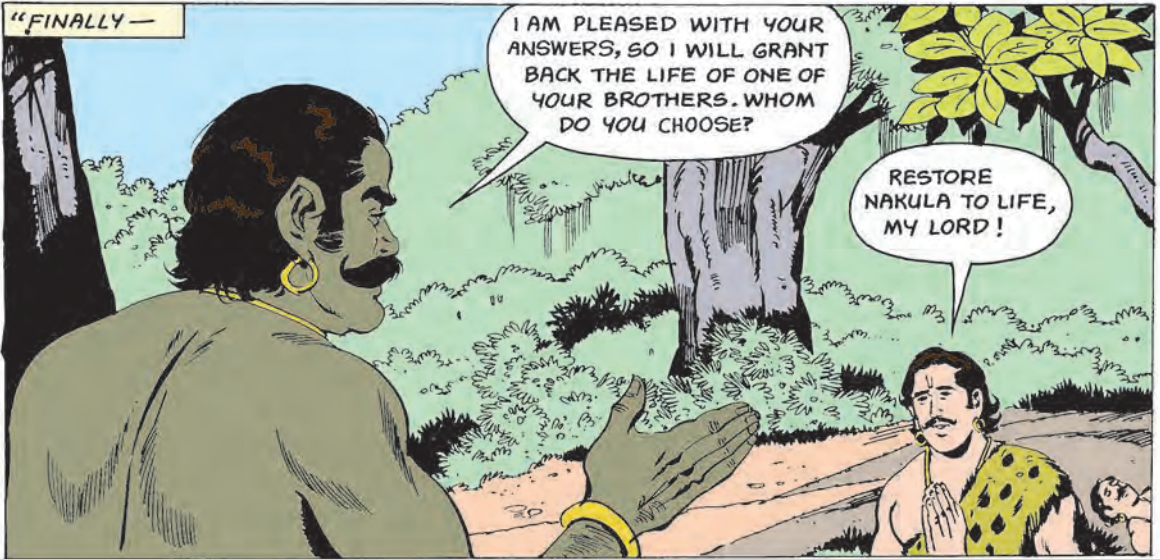


WHO IS THE FRIEND OF A TRAVELLER? WHO IS THE FRIEND OF ONE WHO IS ILL AND ONE WHO IS DYING?

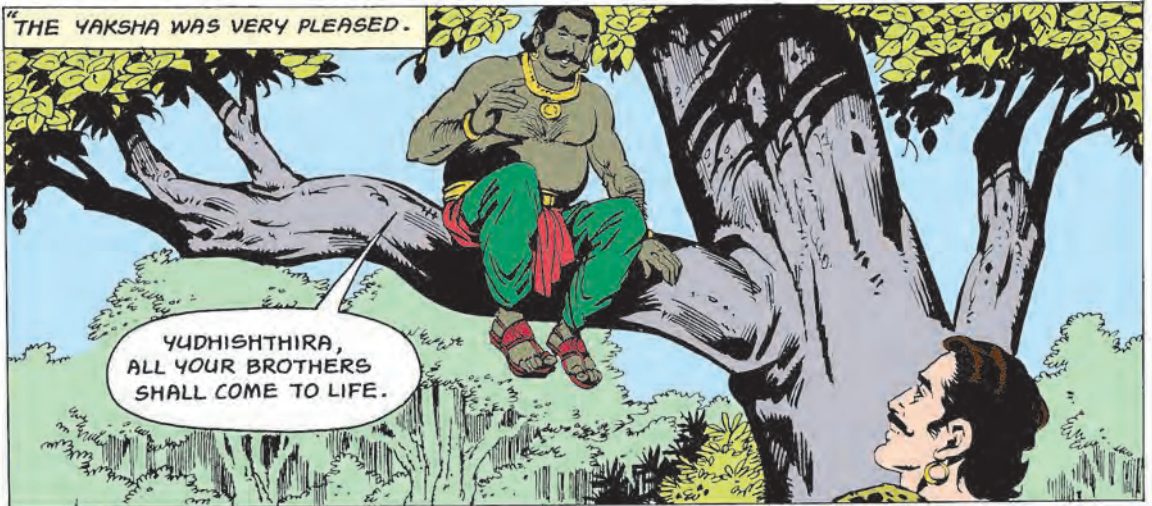








"THE YAKSHA WAS VERY PLEASED."



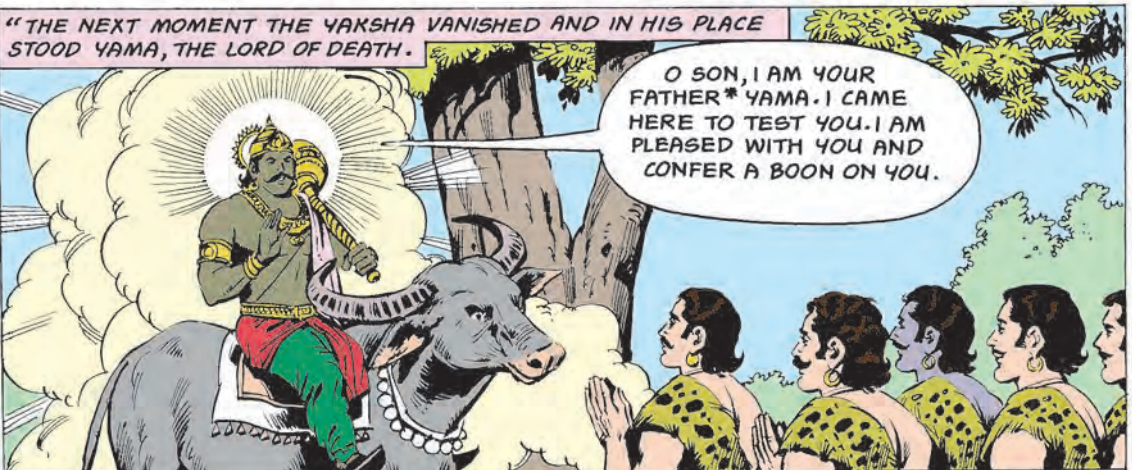
YUDHISHTHIRA,
ALL YOUR BROTHERS
SHALL COME TO LIFE.

"SOON THE FOUR PANDAVAS WERE BACK ON THEIR FEET. AND
YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —



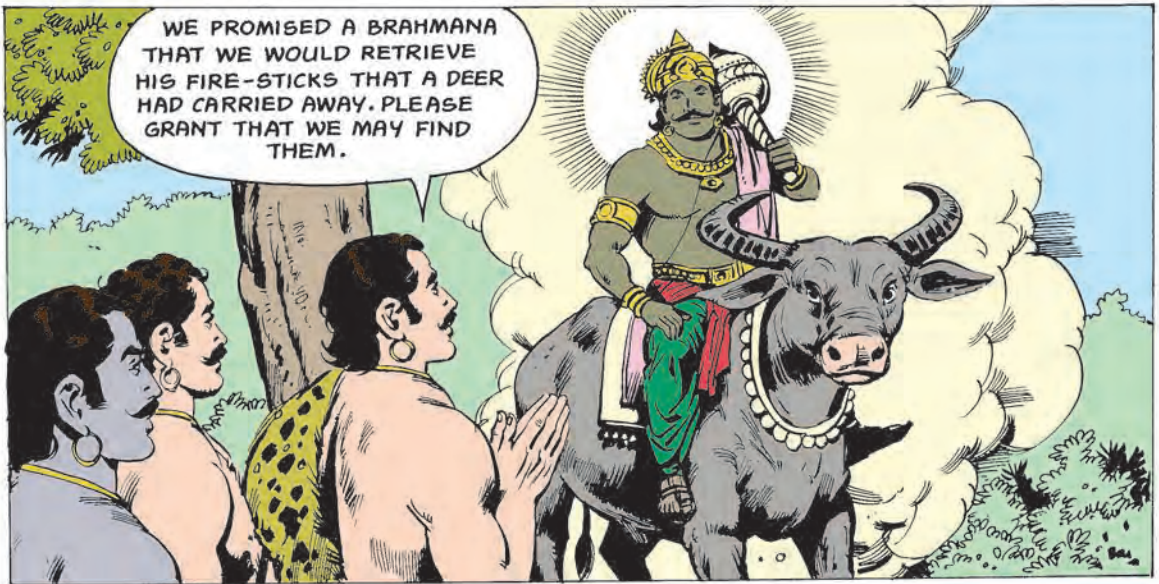
MY LORD, YOU CAN-
NOT BE A YAKSHA. YOU
SLEW MY BROTHERS WHO
ARE CAPABLE OF FIGHTING
A HUNDRED THOUSAND
WARRIORS. ARE YOU A
FRIEND OF OURS? PLEASE
REVEAL YOURSELF.

"THE NEXT MOMENT THE YAKSHA VANISHED AND IN HIS PLACE
STOOD YAMA, THE LORD OF DEATH.

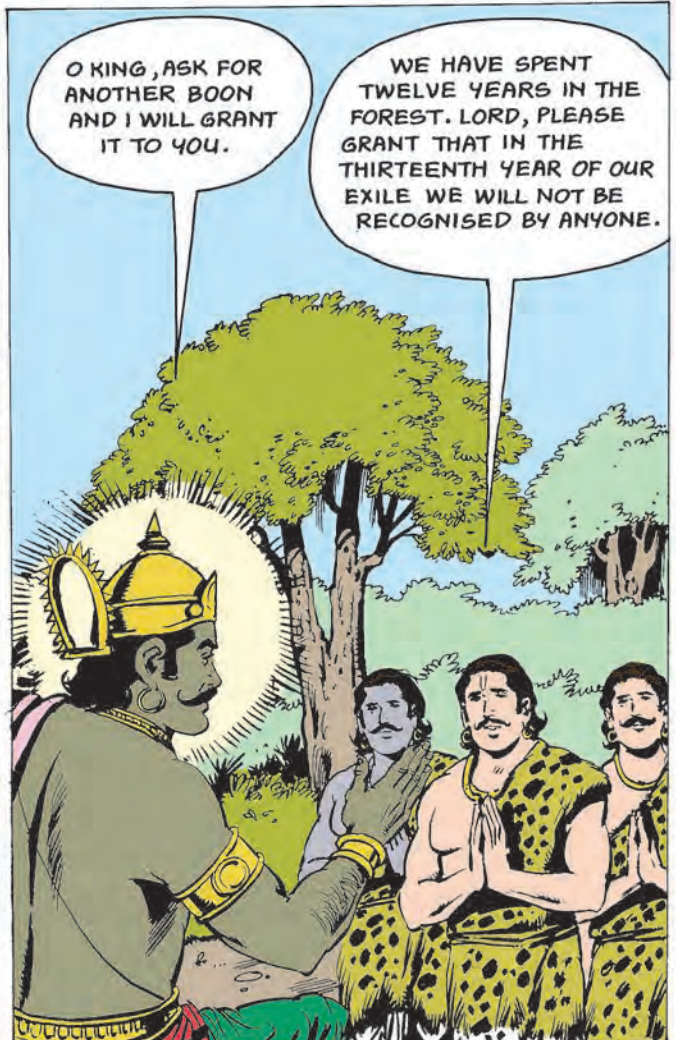


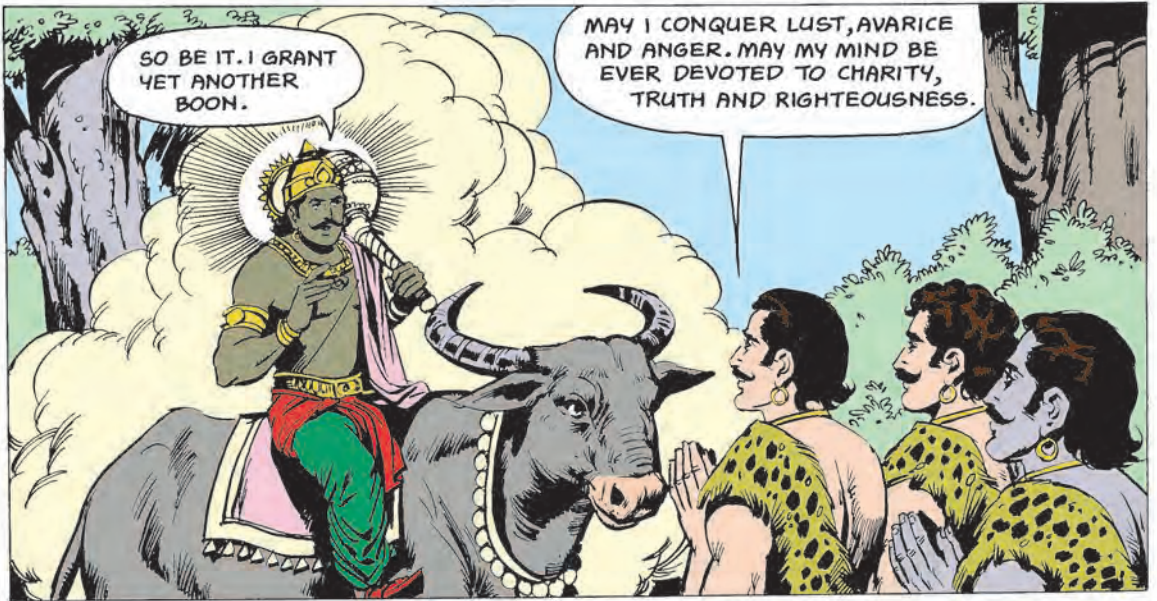
O SON, I AM YOUR
FATHER * YAMA. I CAME
HERE TO TEST YOU. I AM
PLEASED WITH YOU AND
CONFER A BOON ON YOU.

* YUDHISHTHIRA WAS BORN TO KUNTI BY THE GRACE OF YAMA.
SEE MAHABHARATA NO. 3



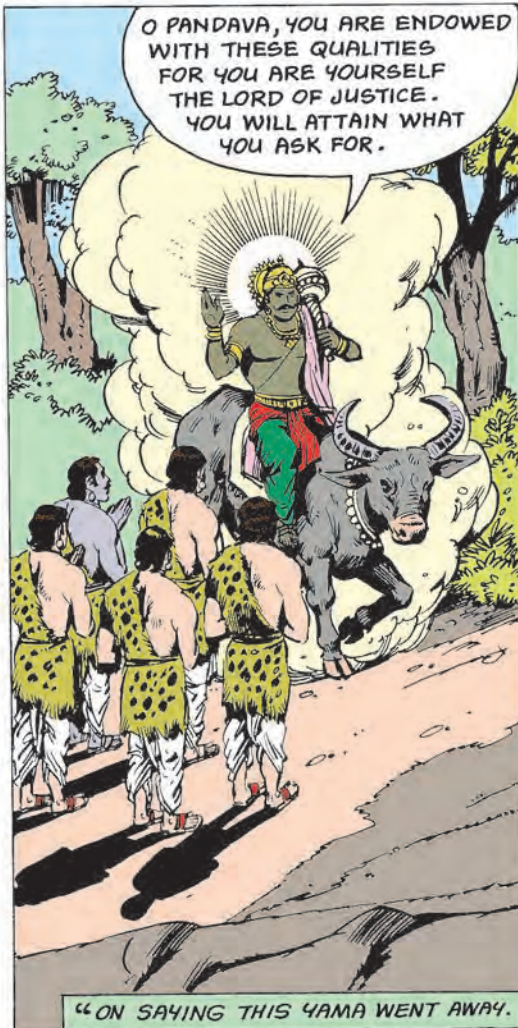
"GIVING YUDHISHTHIRA THE FIRE-STICKS, YAMA SAID —





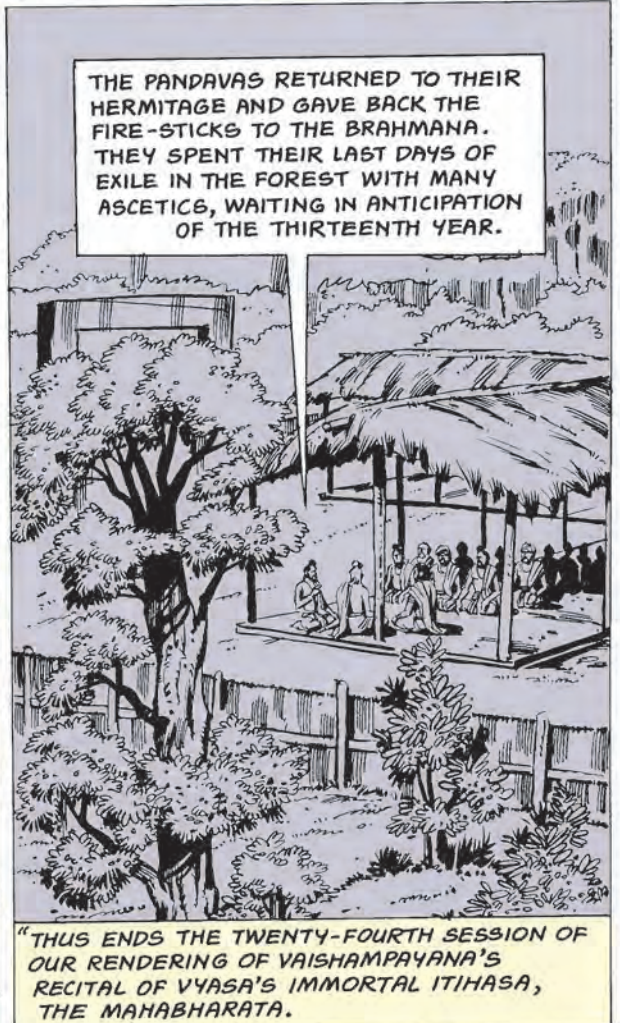
SO BE IT. I GRANT
YET ANOTHER
BOON.

MAY I CONQUER LUST, AVARICE
AND ANGER. MAY MY MIND BE
EVER DEVOTED TO CHARITY,
TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.



O PANDAVA, YOU ARE ENDOWED
WITH THESE QUALITIES
FOR YOU ARE YOURSELF
THE LORD OF JUSTICE.
YOU WILL ATTAIN WHAT
YOU ASK FOR.

"ON SAYING THIS YAMA WENT AWAY.

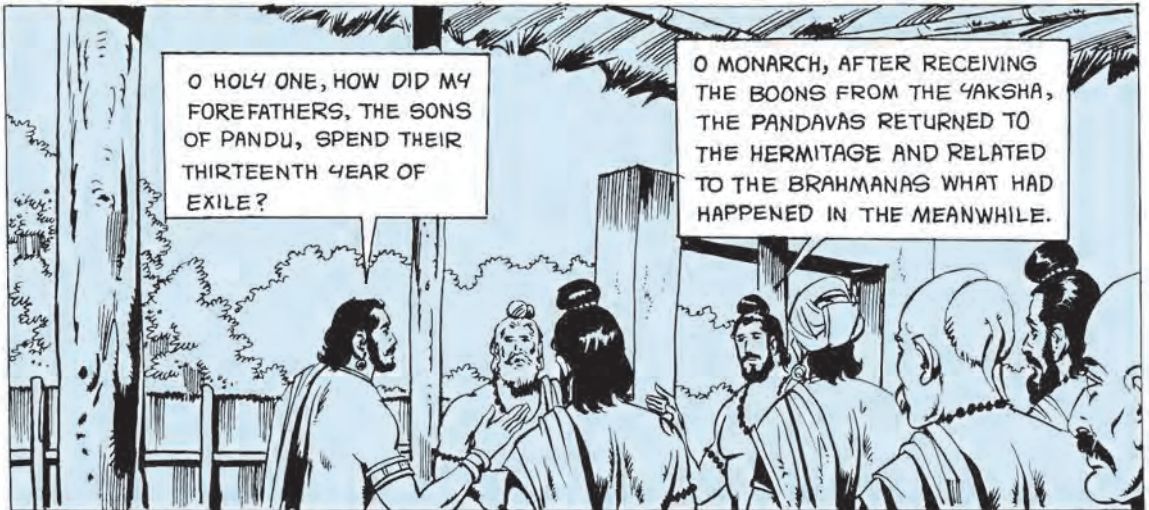


THE PANDAVAS RETURNED TO THEIR
HERMITAGE AND GAVE BACK THE
FIRE-STICKS TO THE BRAHMANA.
THEY SPENT THEIR LAST DAYS OF
EXILE IN THE FOREST WITH MANY
ASCETICS, WAITING IN ANTICIPATION
OF THE THIRTEENTH YEAR.

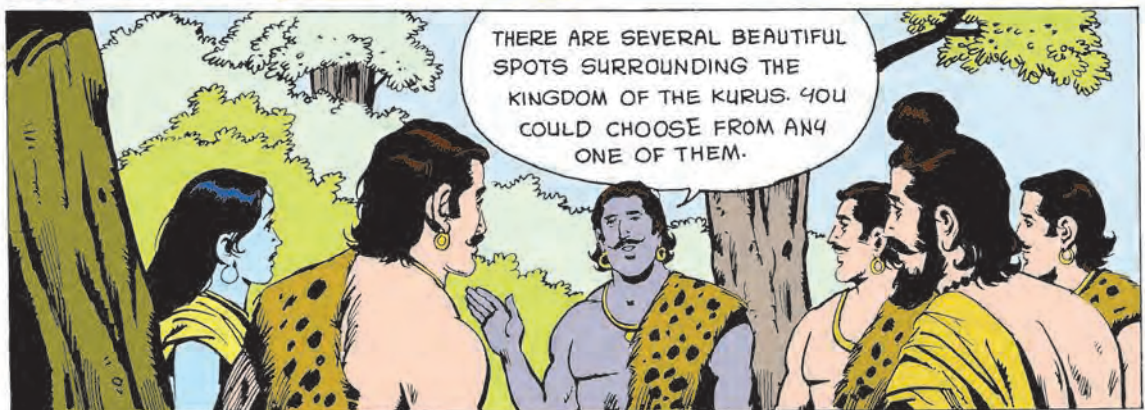
"THUS ENDS THE TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF
OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S
RECITAL OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA,
THE MAHABHARATA.

Mahabharata - 25

THE PANDAVAS AT VIRATA'S PALACE



"THE BROTHERS THEN DISCUSSED HOW THEY WOULD PASS THEIR THIRTEENTH YEAR WITHOUT RUNNING THE RISK OF BEING DISCOVERED BY THE KAURAVAS OR THEIR SUPPORTERS.



"UDHISHTHIRA REPLIED —

ARJUNA, IT IS TRUE THAT BECAUSE OF THE YAKSHA'S BOON OUR DISGUISE WILL NOT BE DISCOVERED. BUT WE MUST SELECT A SPOT WHERE WE COULD LIVE FREE FROM FEAR AND WITHOUT BEING EXPOSED.

LET US GO TO THE KINGDOM OF THE AGED MATSYA KING, VIRATA. HE IS POWERFUL, VIRTUOUS, CHARITABLE AND WISHES WELL OF US.

WE COULD DISGUISE OURSELVES AND ENTER HIS SERVICE IN DIFFERENT CAPACITIES.

ARJUNA ASKED —

O VIRTUOUS ONE, YOU ARE MILD AND MODEST. IN WHAT MANNER DO YOU PROPOSE TO DISGUISE YOURSELF?

I SHALL PRESENT MYSELF AS A BRAHMANA WITH THE NAME KANKA, SKILLED IN DICE AND OTHER GAMES. I WILL TRY TO BECOME ONE OF THE COURTIER OF KING VIRATA.

"AND BHEEMA SAID—

I AM SKILLED IN THE CULINARY ART, SO I WILL GO AS A COOK, BEARING THE NAME BALLAVA. I WILL COOK MOUTH-WATERING DISHES TO PLEASE THE KING. AND, IF BIDDEN, I WILL TAKE PART IN DUELS FOR HIS AMUSEMENT.

"THEN YUDHISHTHIRA ASKED—

AND, MIGHTY ARJUNA, WHAT OFFICE WILL BE YOURS AT THE COURT OF VIRATA?

I WILL GO IN THE GUISE OF A EUNUCH* TO VIRATA'S KINGDOM. I SHALL CALL MYSELF BRIHANNALA AND ENTERTAIN THE KING AND HIS COURTIER. I COULD ALSO BE A DANCE TEACHER TO THE WOMEN OF THE PALACE.

NAKULA, TELL US YOUR PLANS.

UNDER THE NAME GRANTHIKA, I WILL LOOK AFTER KING VIRATA'S HORSES.

*ARJUNA HAD BEEN CURSED BY URVASHI (MAHABHARATA—21) THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO LIVE BEREFT OF MANHOOD.

"AND SAHADEVA SAID—

SINCE I AM SKILLED
AT MILKING AND TAMING
COWS, I WILL LOOK
AFTER THE ROYAL HERD.
I SHALL CALL MYSELF
TANTIPALA.



"TURNING TO DRAUPADI,
YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

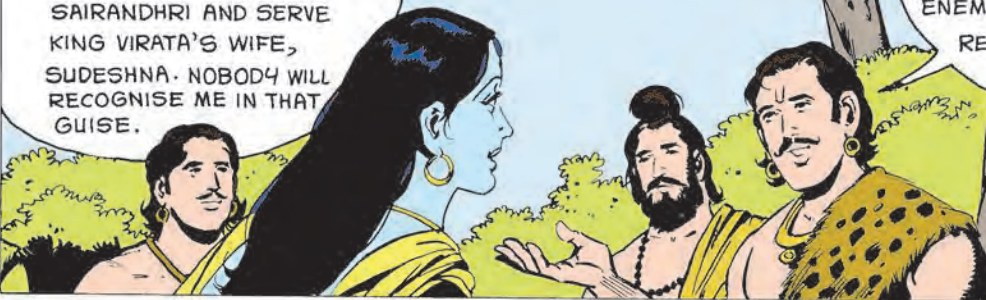
AND OUR
BELOVED WIFE
DRAUPADI, HOW
AND WHERE WILL
YOU LIVE?



"DRAUPADI REPLIED—

MY LORD, THERE IS
A CLASS OF VIRTUOUS
WOMEN CALLED SAIRANDHRIS.
I WILL DRESS AS A
SAIRANDHRI AND SERVE
KING VIRATA'S WIFE,
SUDESHNA. NOBODY WILL
RECOGNISE ME IN THAT
GUISE.

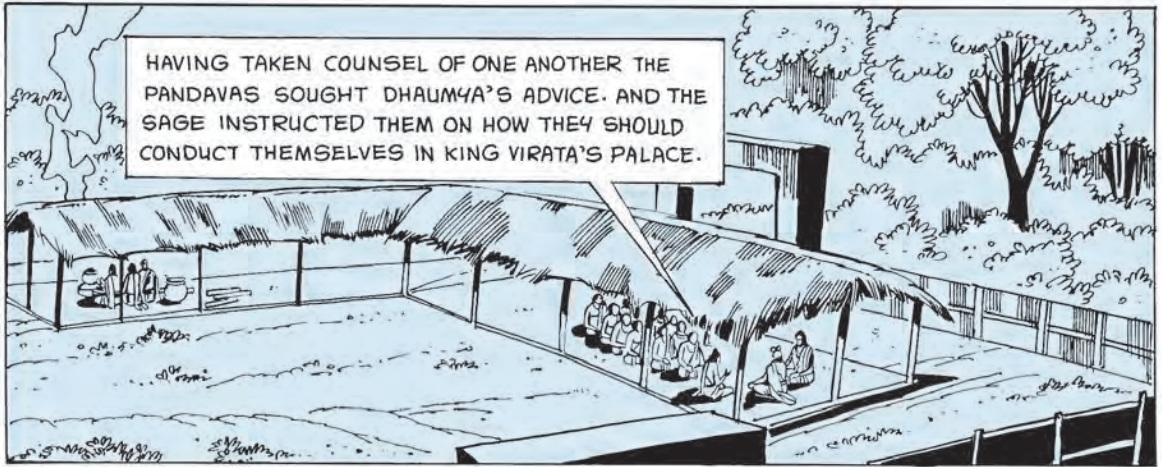
O FAIR MAIDEN, YOU
HAVE SPOKEN WELL.
CONDUCT YOURSELF
THERE IN SUCH A
WAY THAT OUR
ENEMIES NEVER
RECOGNISE
YOU.



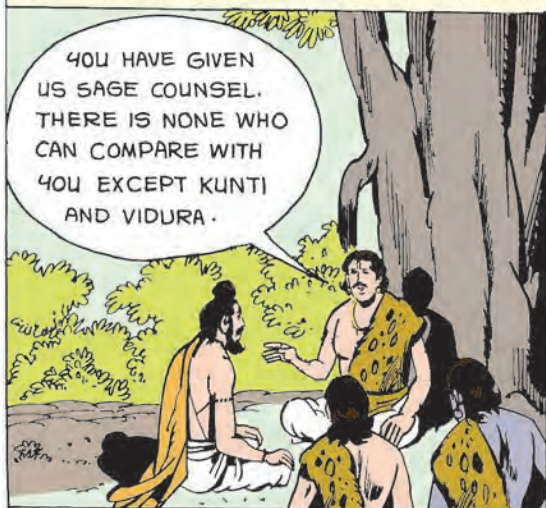
" THEN YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

WE HAVE DECIDED WHAT COURSE
OF ACTION WE WILL BE TAKING.
LET THE SAGES AND PRIESTS
REPAIR TO THE ABODE OF DRUPADA
AND MAINTAIN THE AGNIHOTRA
FIRES. AND LET DRAUPADI'S
MAID-SERVANTS GO TO THE
PANCHALA KINGDOM. AND IF
ASKED, ANSWER—WE DO NOT
KNOW WHERE THE PANDAVAS
HAVE GONE, AFTER LEAVING
US AT DWAITAVANA.

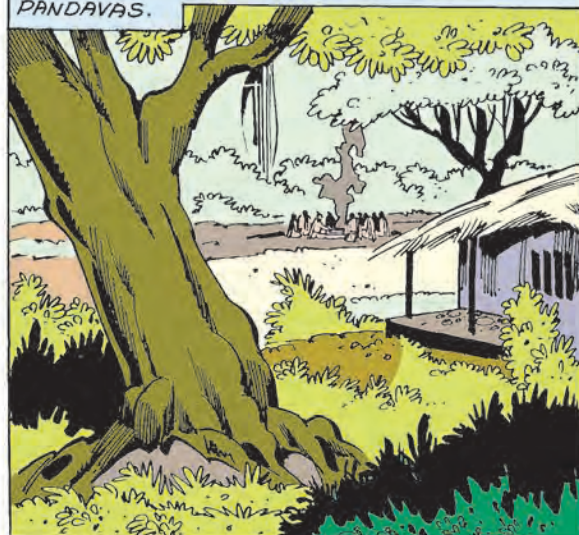




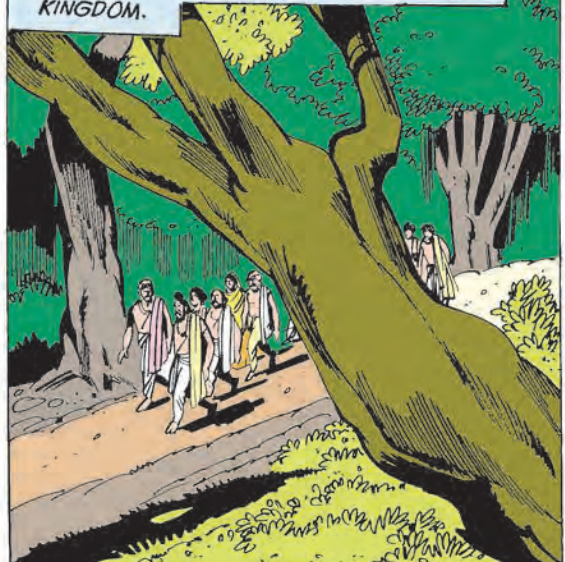
"YUDHISHTHIRA WAS GRATEFUL FOR THE ADVICE.



"THE BRAHMANAS THEN PERFORMED SACRED RITES AND PRAYED FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE PANDAVAS.



"THEN THEY DEPARTED FOR THE PANCHALA KINGDOM.



"AS FOR THE PANDAVAS THEY PROCEEDED IN THE DIRECTION OF THE RIVER YAMUNA."



"AFTER A LONG JOURNEY—"

VIRATA'S KINGDOM
IS STILL AT A DISTANCE.
LET US SPEND THE
NIGHT HERE SINCE I
FEEL TIRED.



ARJUNA, YOU CARRY
DRAUPADI ON YOUR
SHOULDERS. ONCE WE
CROSS THE FOREST, WE
SHALL REACH THE
CITY IN SEFETY.

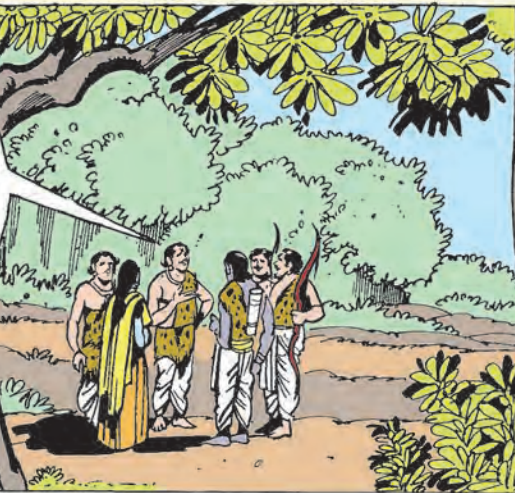


"THEREUPON THE PANDAVAS CONTINUED THEIR TRAVEL, WITH DRAUPADI BEING CARRIED BY ARJUNA ON HIS SHOULDERS."



"ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY, YUDHISHTHIRA ADDRESSED ARJUNA —

WHERE WILL WE
HIDE OUR WEAPONS?
IF WE ENTER WITH SO
MANY WEAPONS IT WILL
SURELY CAUSE ALARM AMONG
THE CITIZENS. MOREOVER, THE
GANDEEVA* IS KNOWN BY ALL,
AND SO PEOPLE WILL
SOON RECOGNISE
US...

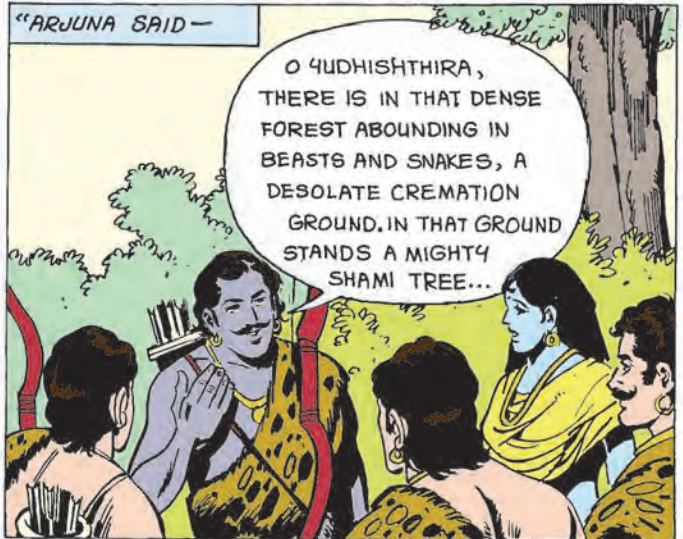


... AND IF
WE ARE
DISCOVERED, WE
SHALL HAVE,
ACCORDING TO
OUR PROMISE,
TO PASS ANOTHER
TWELVE YEARS
IN THE FOREST.



"ARJUNA SAID —

O YUDHISHTHIRA,
THERE IS IN THAT DENSE
FOREST ABUNDING IN
BEASTS AND SNAKES, A
DESOLATE CREMATION
GROUND. IN THAT GROUND
STANDS A MIGHTY
SHAMI TREE...

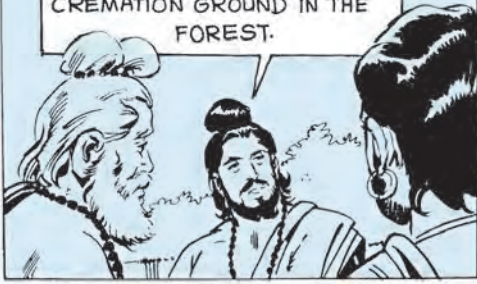


...WITH GIGANTIC BRANCHES. I
WILL GO UP THE TREE AND CONCEAL
OUR WEAPONS AMONG THE
INACCESSIBLE BRANCHES OF THE
TREE. LATER WE WILL GO AND LIVE
IN THE CITY WITHOUT ANY
ANXIETY!



* ARJUNA'S BOW

THEREAFTER THE PANDAVAS DIVESTED THEMSELVES OF THEIR WEAPONS. THE MIGHTY CELESTIAL WEAPONS WERE GATHERED AND TAKEN TO THE CREMATION GROUND IN THE FOREST.



"NAKULA ASCENDED THE TREE AND SECURED THE WEAPONS TO THE BRANCHES WHICH WERE STRONG AND WHICH COULD RESIST RAIN AND WIND.



"THE PANDAVAS THEN HUNG FROM THE TREE A FOUL-SMELLING CARCASS TO DETER PEOPLE FROM APPROACHING THE TREE....."



"SATISFIED WITH THEIR WORK, THEY TURNED TOWARDS THE KINGDOM OF VIRATA."



"YUDHISHTHIRA'S MIND WAS FULL OF PRAISES OF THE GODDESS DURGA."



"HE AND HIS BROTHERS TOGETHER WITH DRAUPADI, DESIROUS OF OBTAINING A VISION OF THE GODDESS, INVOKED HER BY RECITING VARIOUS HYMNS."

"O MOTHER, GRANT ME PROTECTION."



"PRAISED BY THE SONS OF PANDU, THE GODDESS APPEARED BEFORE THEM."

"O MIGHTY KING, THROUGH MY GRACE YOU SHALL SLAY THE KAURAVAS AND VICTORY SHALL BE YOURS."



"YOU SHALL RULE OVER THE EARTH ONCE MORE AND JOY AND HEALTH WILL BE YOURS. AND THROUGH MY GRACE NEITHER THE KURU SPIES NOR THOSE THAT DWELL IN THE COUNTRY OF THE MATSYAS WILL SUCCEED IN RECOGNISING YOU ALL AS LONG AS YOU RESIDE IN VIRATA'S CITY."



AFTER THIS, THE PANDAVAS WENT IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS, EACH TO TAKE UP HIS NEW SERVICE FOR THE PERIOD OF ONE YEAR.

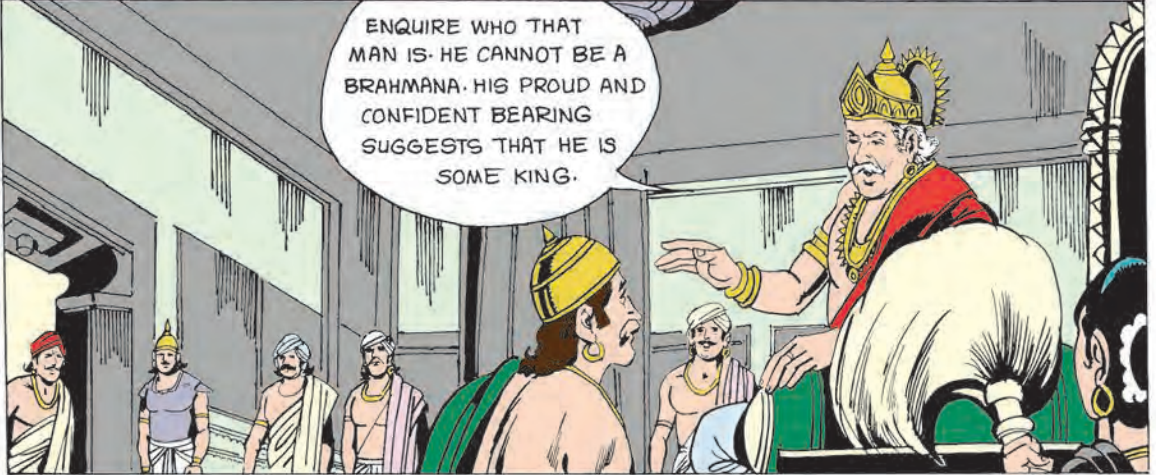


"YUDHISHTHIRA WRAPPED HIS DICE OF GOLD IN A PIECE OF CLOTH AND PROCEEDED TOWARDS THE COURT OF VIRATA.



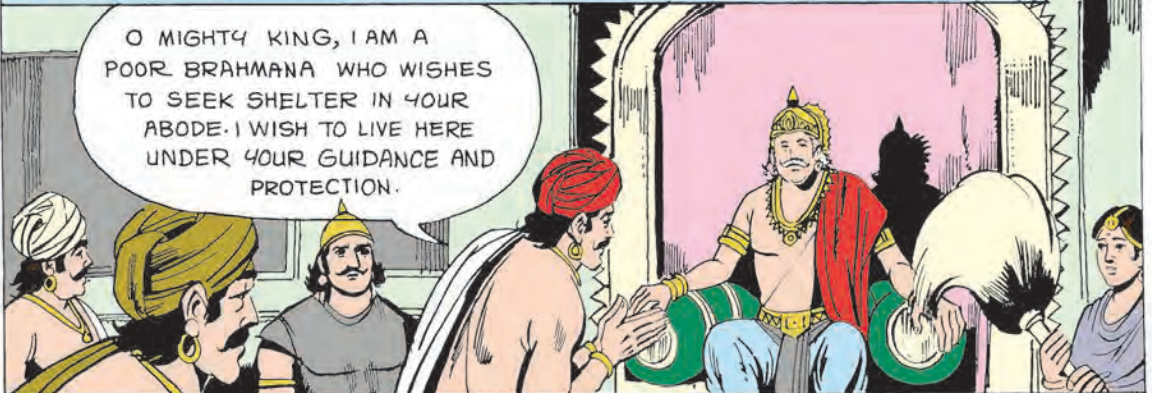
"AT THE COURT, KING VIRATA WAS VERY IMPRESSED BY YUDHISHTHIRA'S APPEARANCE.

ENQUIRE WHO THAT MAN IS. HE CANNOT BE A BRAHMANA. HIS PROUD AND CONFIDENT BEARING SUGGESTS THAT HE IS SOME KING.

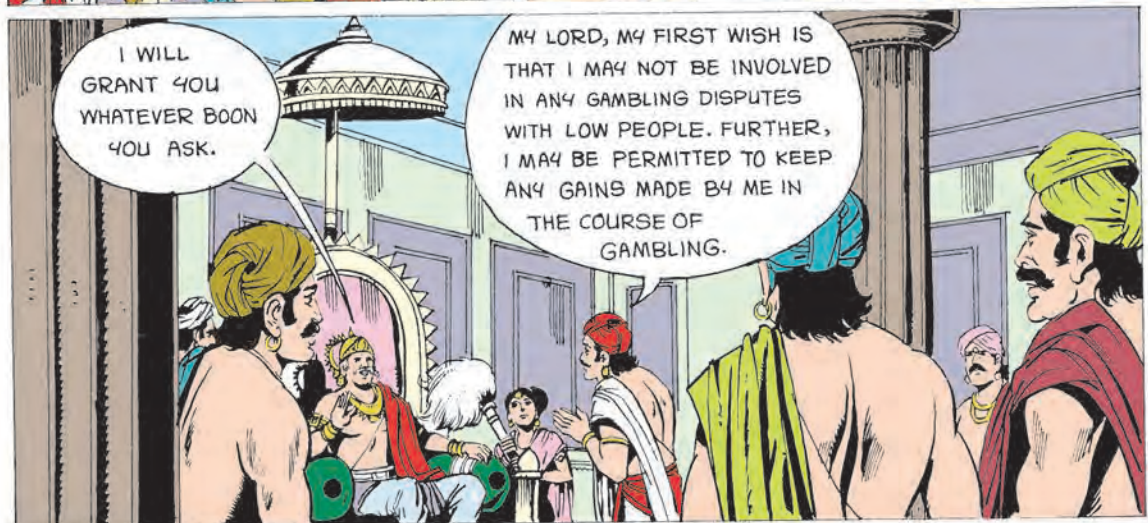
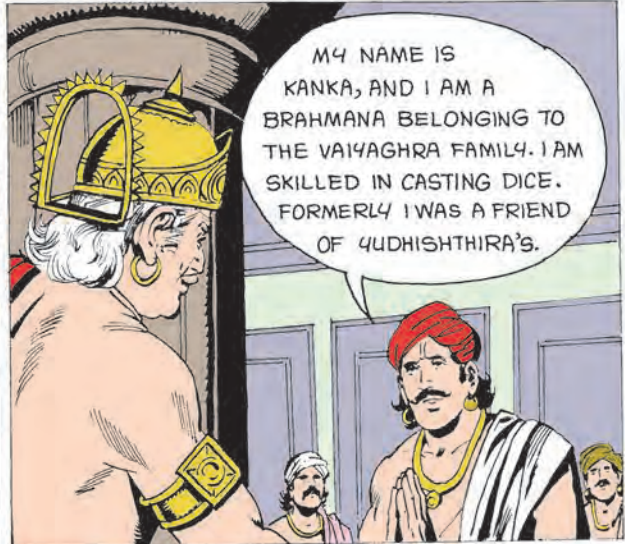
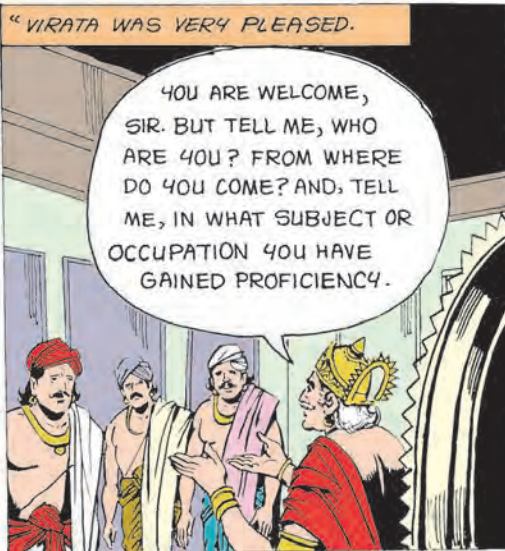


"WHILE VIRATA WAS TALKING TO HIS MINISTER, YUDHISHTHIRA APPROACHED HIM —

O MIGHTY KING, I AM A POOR BRAHMANA WHO WISHES TO SEEK SHELTER IN YOUR ABODE. I WISH TO LIVE HERE UNDER YOUR GUIDANCE AND PROTECTION.



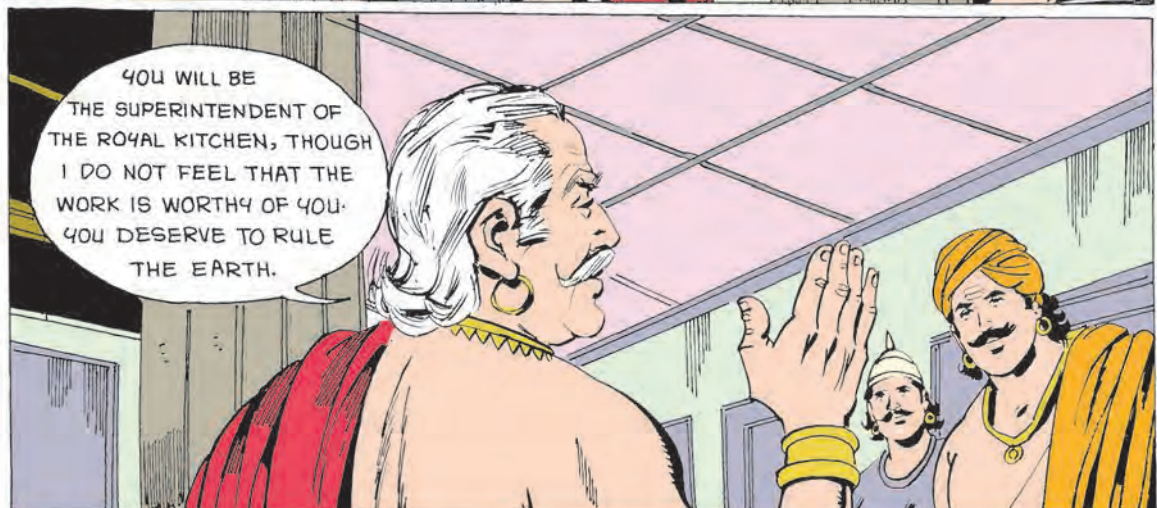
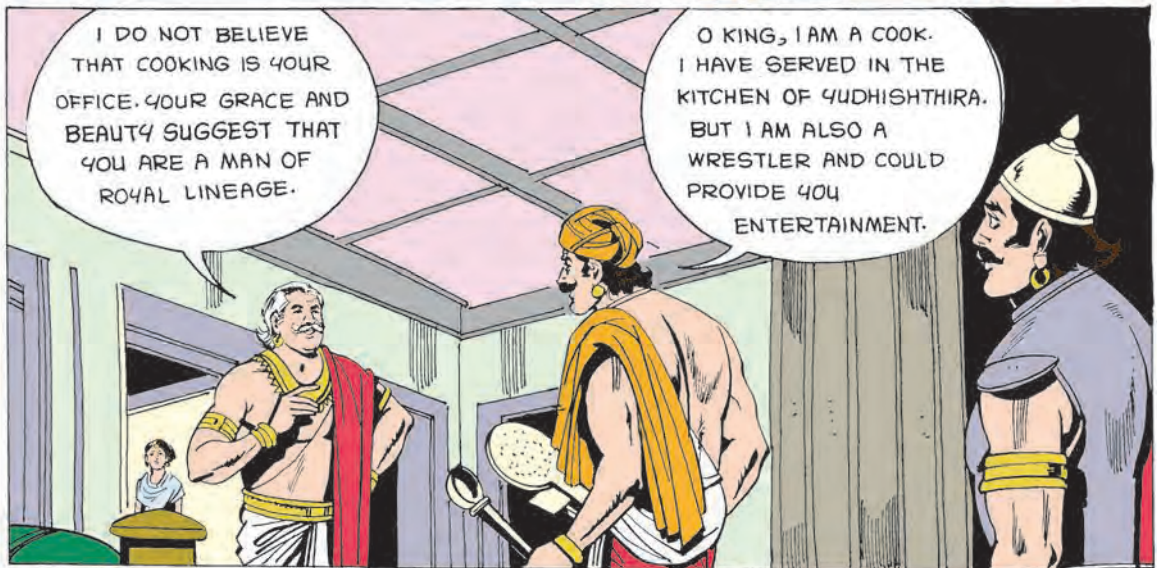
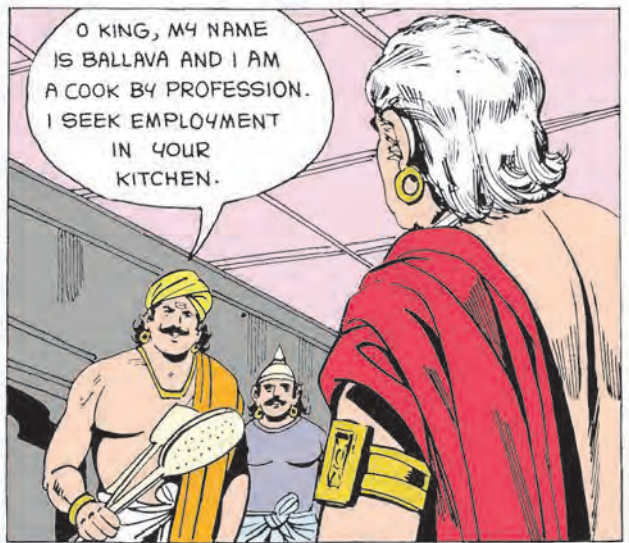
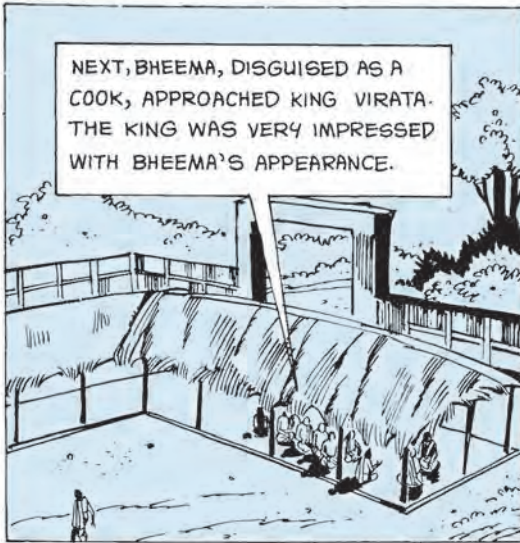
"VIRATA WAS VERY PLEASED."



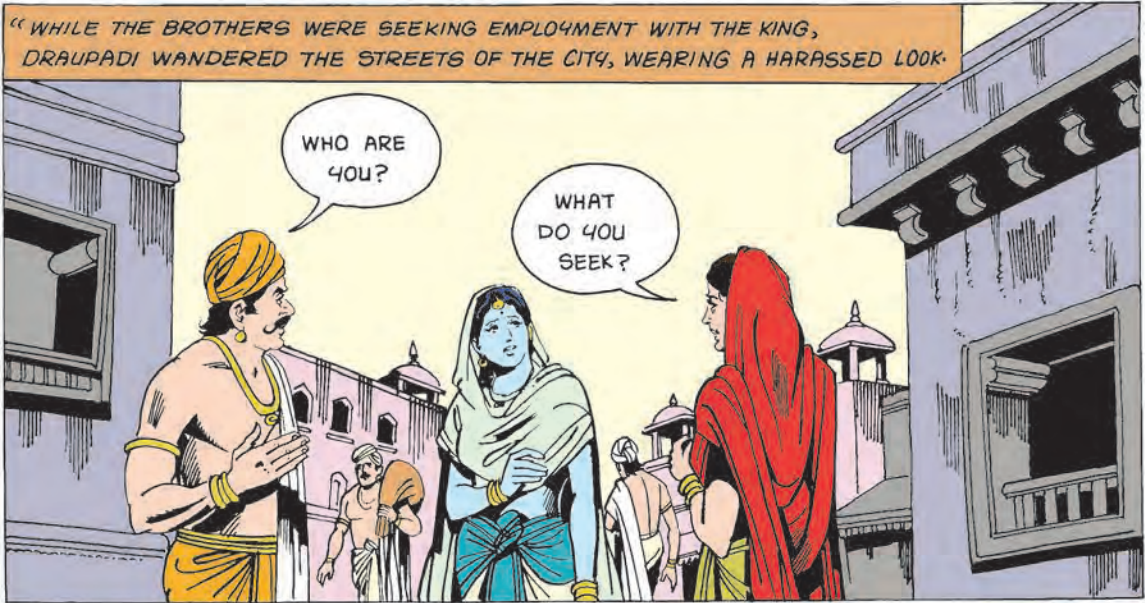
"VIRATA THEN PROCLAIMED —

ALL THE ASSEMBLED SUBJECTS, LISTEN! FROM TODAY KANKA IS AS MUCH LORD OF THE REALM AS MYSELF. HE SHALL RIDE WITH ME AND HAVE ALL PLEASURES AT HIS DISPOSAL. HE SHALL LOOK AFTER THE AFFAIRS OF STATE AND ANYONE WHO DARES TO CAUSE HIM DISPLEASURE SHALL BE PUNISHED.

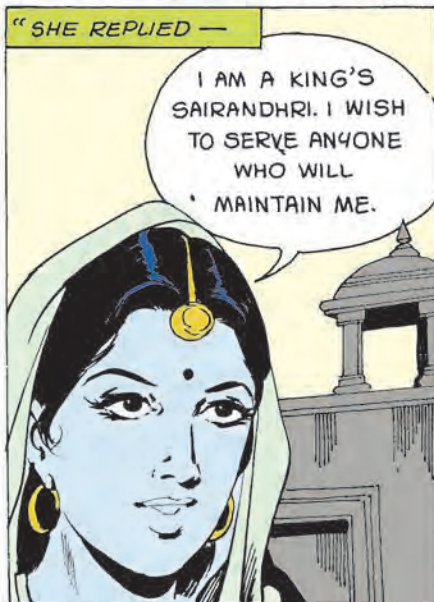




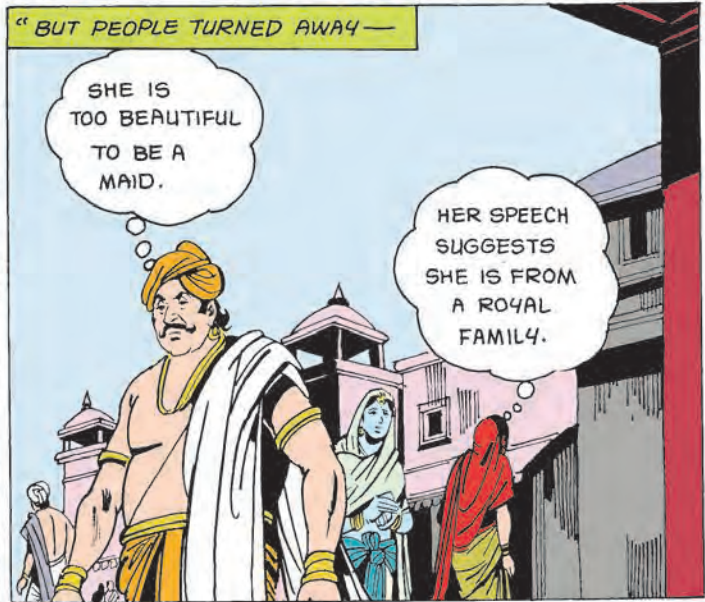
"WHILE THE BROTHERS WERE SEEKING EMPLOYMENT WITH THE KING, DRAUPADI WANDERED THE STREETS OF THE CITY, WEARING A HARASSED LOOK."



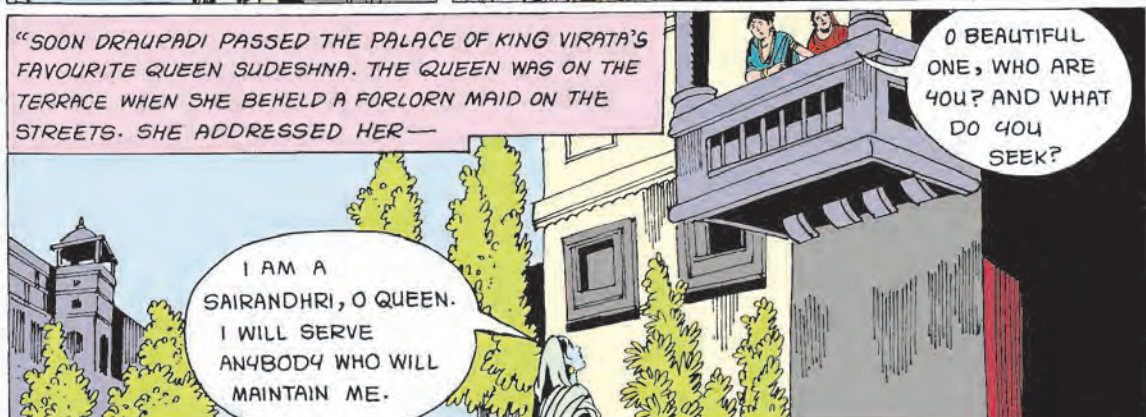
"SHE REPLIED —



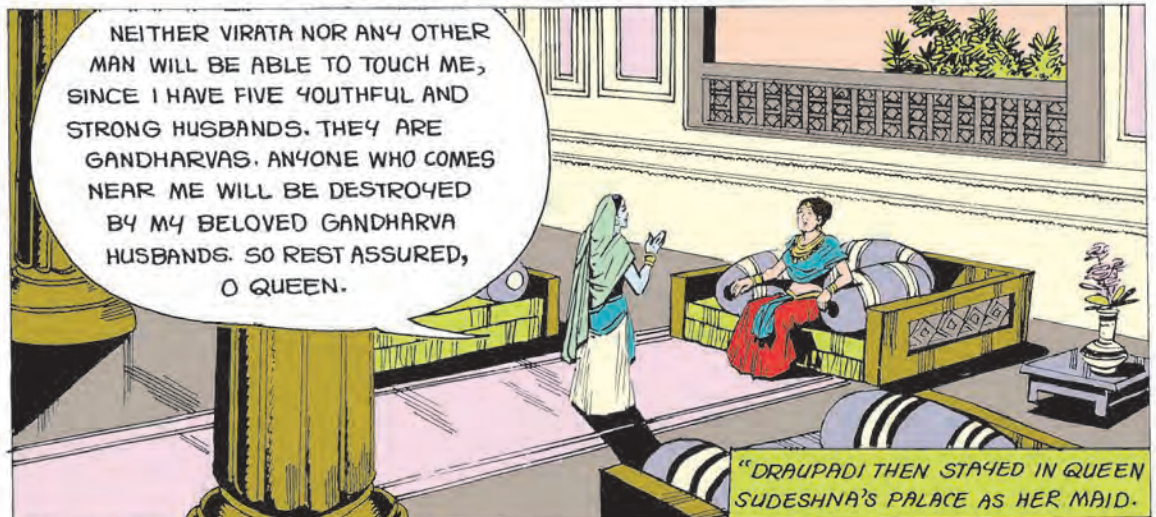
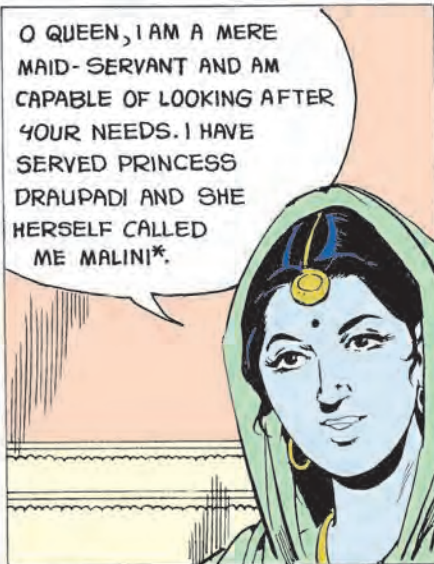
"BUT PEOPLE TURNED AWAY —



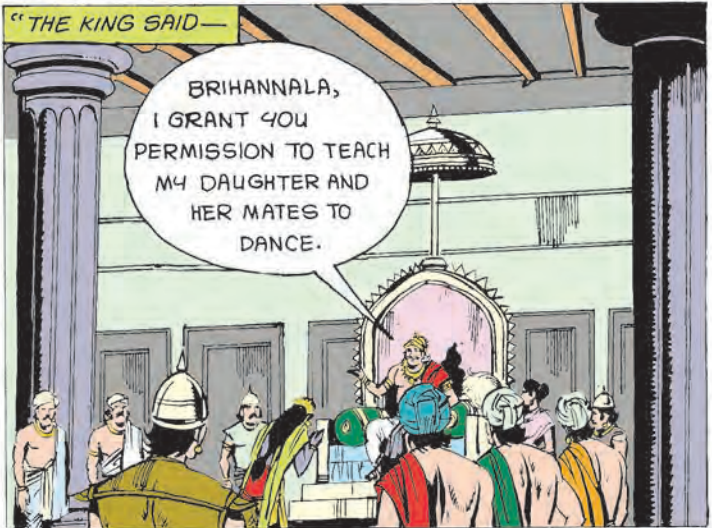
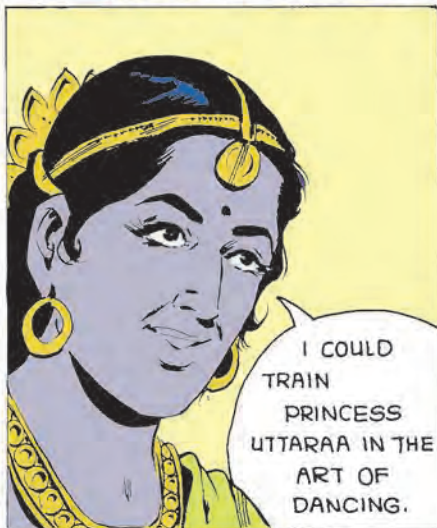
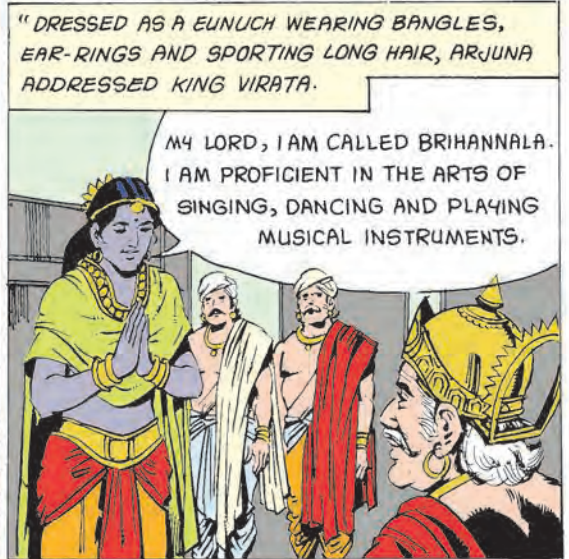
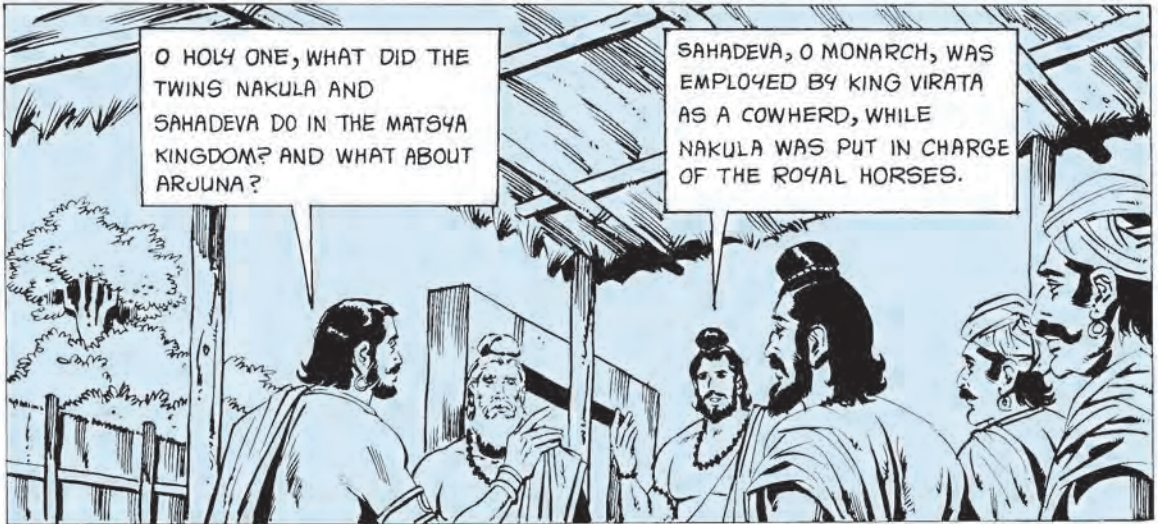
"SOON DRAUPADI PASSED THE PALACE OF KING VIRATA'S FAVOURITE QUEEN SUDESHNA. THE QUEEN WAS ON THE TERRACE WHEN SHE BEHELD A FORLORN MAID ON THE STREETS. SHE ADDRESSED HER —



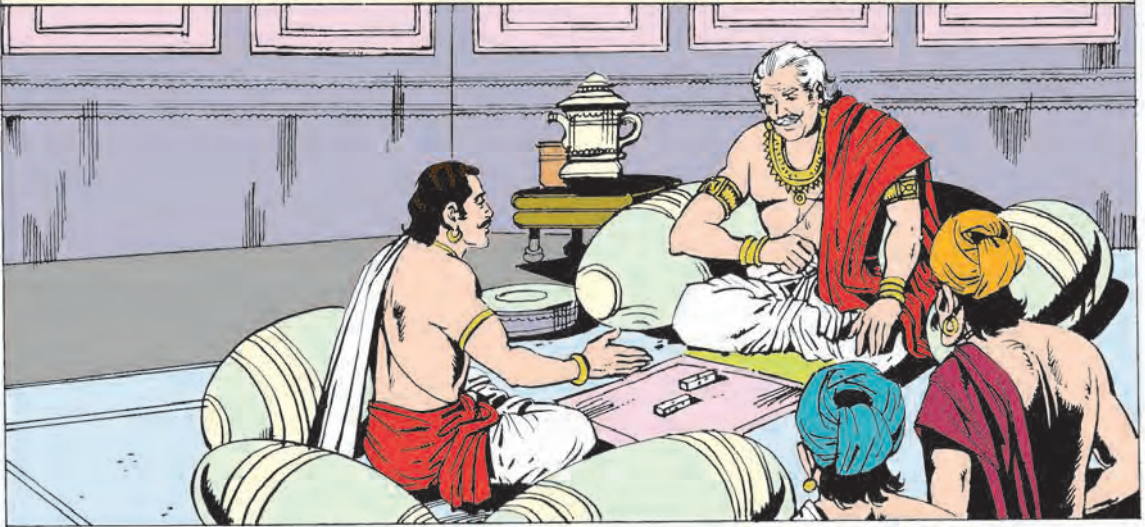
"LATER IN THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER —



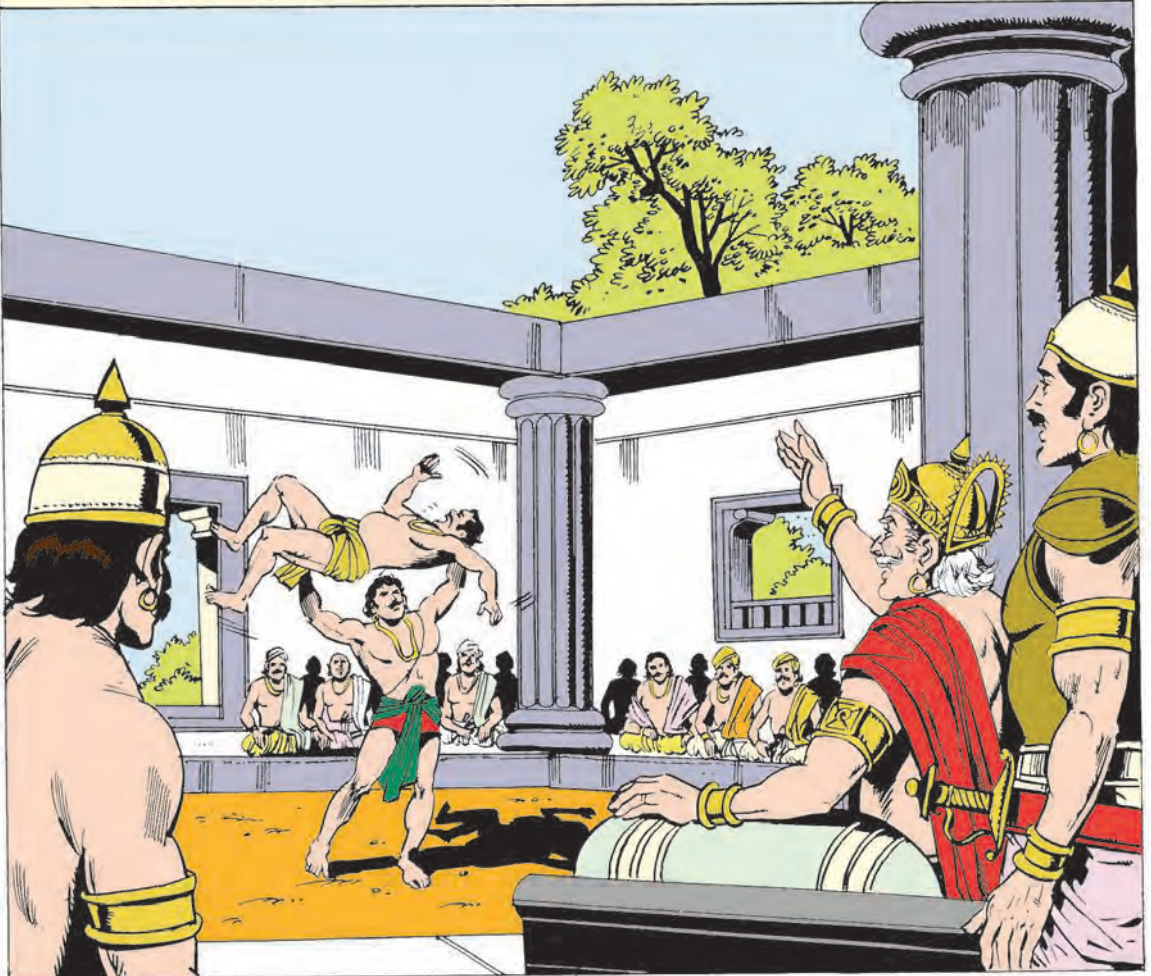
"DRAUPADI THEN STAYED IN QUEEN SUDESHNA'S PALACE AS HER MAID."



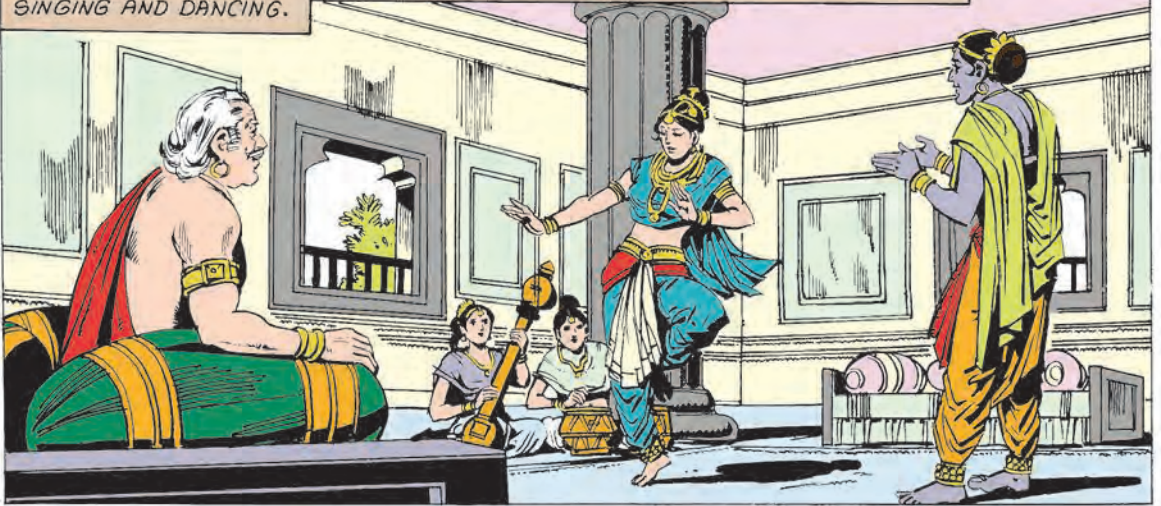
"LIVING IN DISGUISE, THE PANDAVAS PERFORMED THE DUTIES ASSIGNED TO THEM. THUS YUDHISHTHIRA ENTERTAINED THE KING AND HIS COURTIERS WITH THE GAME OF DICE.



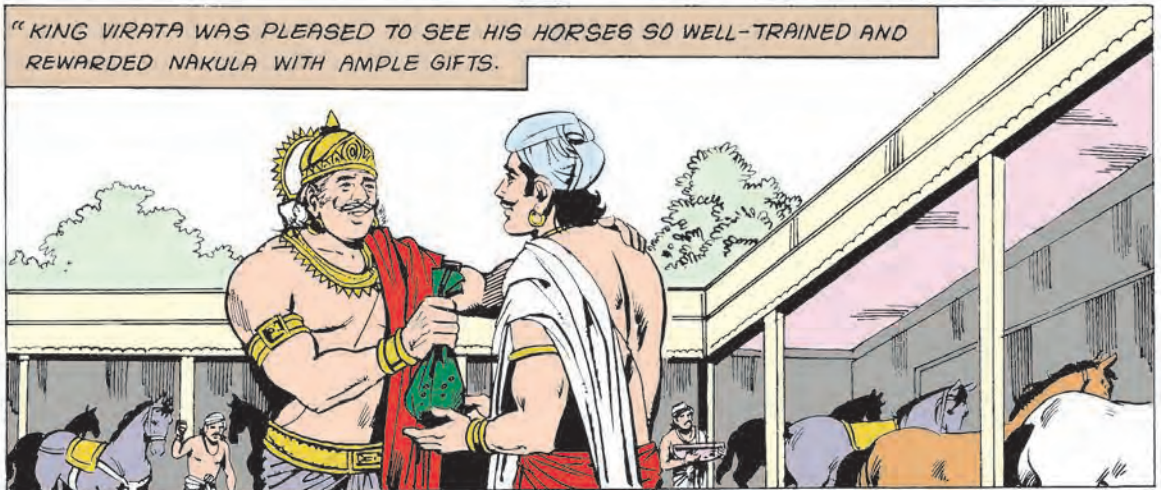
"BHEEMA, WHEN HE WASN'T COOKING, PROVIDED EXCITEMENT TO SPECTATORS IN THE ARENA.



"ARJUNA TRAINED THE YOUNG MAIDENS TO ENTERTAIN THE KING WITH THEIR SINGING AND DANCING."



"KING VIRATA WAS PLEASED TO SEE HIS HORSES SO WELL-TRAINED AND REWARDED NAKULA WITH AMPLE GIFTS."



"AND WHEN THE KING BEHELD AROUND SAHADEVA A HERD OF WELL-TRAINED BULLOCKS, HE BESTOWED UPON HIM WEALTH OF A DIVERSE KIND."



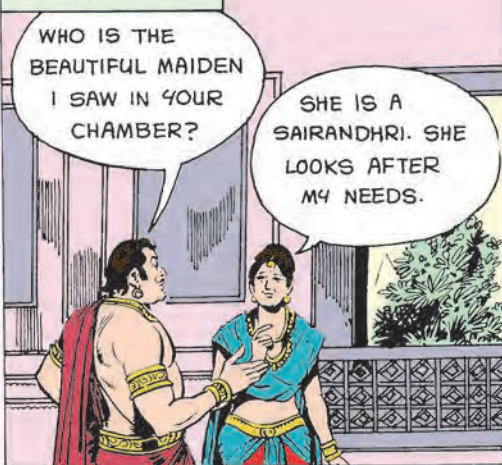
"BUT DRAUPADI WAS AFFLICTED WITH GREAT SORROW ON SEEING THE MIGHTY PANDAVAS REDUCED TO SUCH A LOW STATUS."



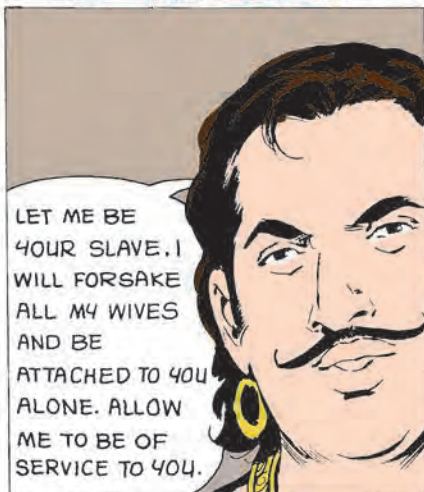
"THUS THE PANDAVAS PASSED TEN MONTHS IN DISGUISE IN THE KINGDOM OF MATSYA. IT WAS ONE DAY THEREAFTER THAT KEECHAKA, THE COMMANDER OF VIRATA'S FORCES, CHANCED TO BEHOLD DRAUPADI.



"HE APPROACHED HIS SISTER QUEEN SUDESHNA.



"SMITTEN BY HER BEAUTY, KEECHAKA ONE DAY APPROACHED DRAUPADI.

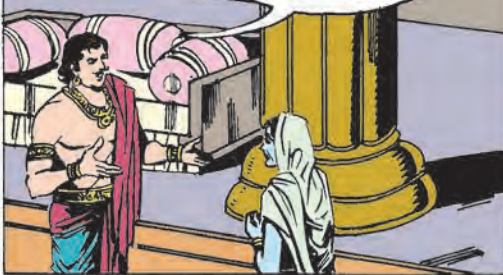


"DRAUPADI REPLIED —



"BUT THIS DID NOT DAMPEN KEECHAKA'S ARDOUR."

LADY,
DO NOT DISREGARD
ME. I AM THE REAL LORD
OF THIS KINGDOM. THERE
IS NOT ANOTHER MAN
ON EARTH TO
RIVAL ME.



IF YOU ACCEPT MY
OFFER YOU CAN
ENJOY THE BEST
OF WORLDLY
PLEASURES.

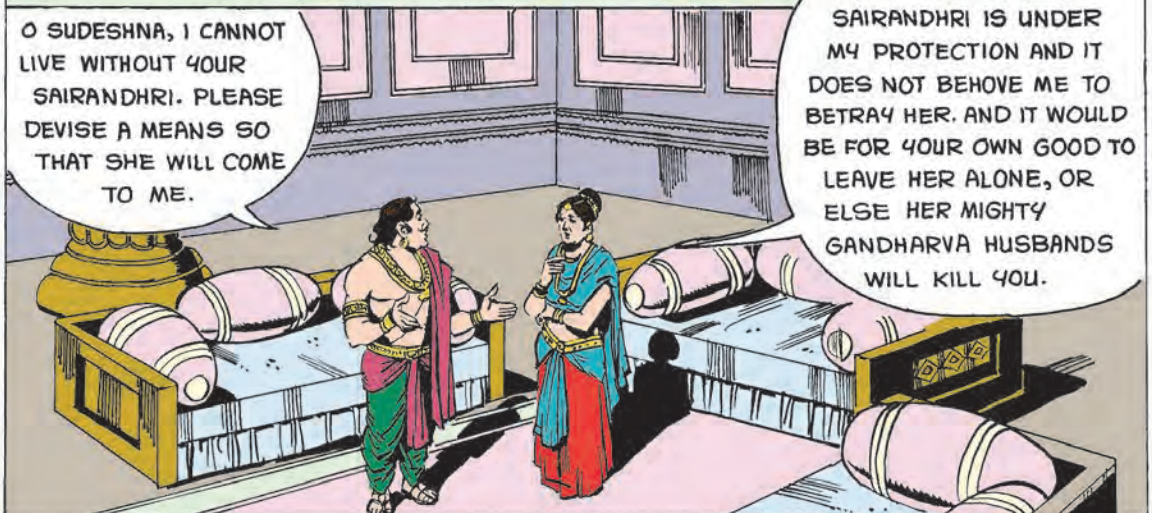


BEWARE, I AM DEAR TO MY
FIVE GANDHARVA HUSBANDS.
AND IF THEY ARE ENRAGED THEY
WILL KILL YOU. THEN EVEN IF YOU
CONCEAL YOURSELF INSIDE
THE EARTH OR ESCAPE SOARING
INTO THE SKY THERE WILL
BE NO ESCAPE FROM THE
ANGER OF THESE MIGHTY
GANDHARVAS.



"KEECHAKA THEN WENT TO HIS SISTER AND SPOKE TO HER THUS—

O SUDESHNA, I CANNOT
LIVE WITHOUT YOUR
SAIRANDHRI. PLEASE
DEVISE A MEANS SO
THAT SHE WILL COME
TO ME.



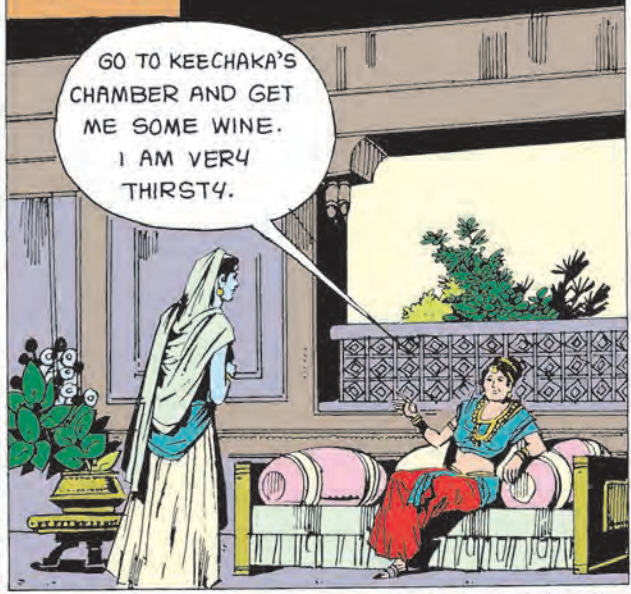
DEAR BROTHER, THE
SAIRANDHRI IS UNDER
MY PROTECTION AND IT
DOES NOT BEHOVE ME TO
BETRAY HER. AND IT WOULD
BE FOR YOUR OWN GOOD TO
LEAVE HER ALONE, OR
ELSE HER MIGHTY
GANDHARVA HUSBANDS
WILL KILL YOU.

"AFTER A LOT OF PERSUASION, SUDESHNA FINALLY GAVE IN.



I SHALL SEND MY SAIRANDHRI TO YOUR CHAMBER ON SOME PRETEXT. YOU CAN HUMOUR HER THERE, FREE FROM INTERRUPTION.

"WHEN KEECHAKA LEFT, SUDESHNA CALLED DRAUPADI.



GO TO KEECHAKA'S CHAMBER AND GET ME SOME WINE. I AM VERY THIRSTY.

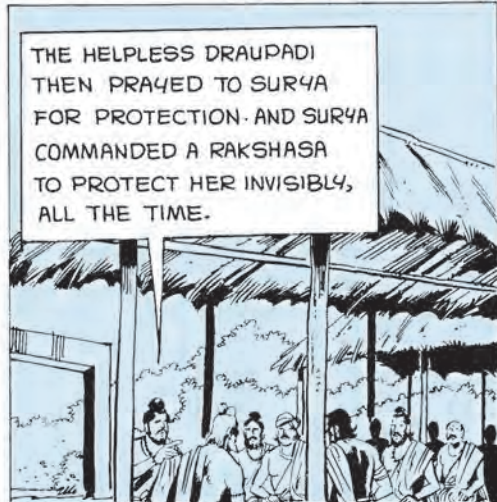
"DRAUPADI WAS FRIGHTENED—



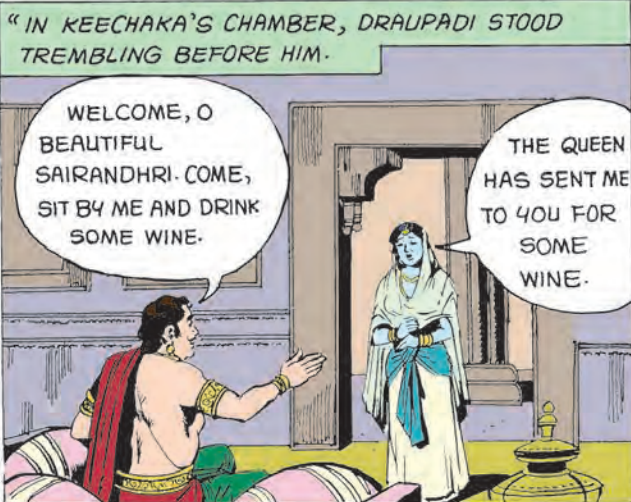
O QUEEN, DO NOT SEND ME ON ANY ERRAND TO KEECHAKA. HE IS SURE TO MOLEST ME. YOU HAVE MANY OTHER MAIDS. SEND ONE OF THEM.



DO NOT FEAR. SENT BY ME, HE WILL NOT DARE TO HARM YOU.



THE HELPLESS DRAUPADI THEN PRAYED TO SURYA FOR PROTECTION. AND SURYA COMMANDED A RAKSHASA TO PROTECT HER INVISIBLY, ALL THE TIME.



"IN KEECHAKA'S CHAMBER, DRAUPADI STOOD TREMBLING BEFORE HIM.

WELCOME, O BEAUTIFUL SAIRANDHRI. COME, SIT BY ME AND DRINK SOME WINE.

THE QUEEN HAS SENT ME TO YOU FOR SOME WINE.

"TAKING HOLD OF DRAUPADI'S HAND, KEECHAKA SAID—

THE QUEEN'S
ORDERS WILL BE
CARRIED OUT BY SOME
OTHER PERSON.
YOU STAY WITH
ME.

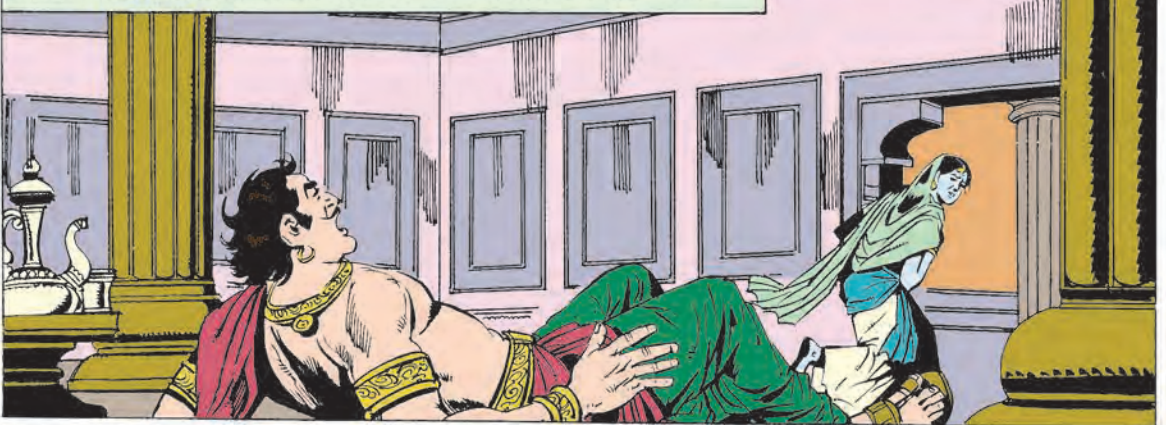


"FREEING HERSELF FROM HIM, DRAUPADI EXCLAIMED—

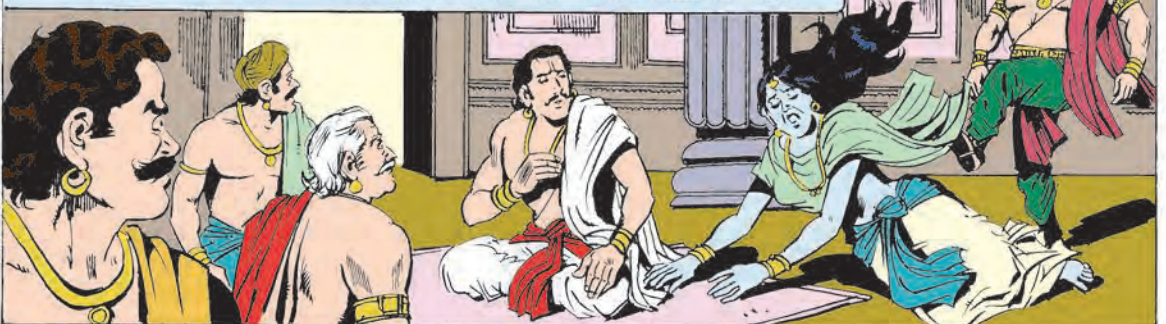
O SINNER! NEVER EVEN
IN MY MIND HAVE I BEEN DISLOYAL
TO MY HUSBANDS. YOU WILL
REMAIN BOUND BY THE TRUTH OF
MY FAITHFULNESS. AND LISTEN,
YOU WILL RUE THIS ACT OF
YOURS AND WILL BE
DRAGGED ON THE GROUND
BY YOUR ENEMY.



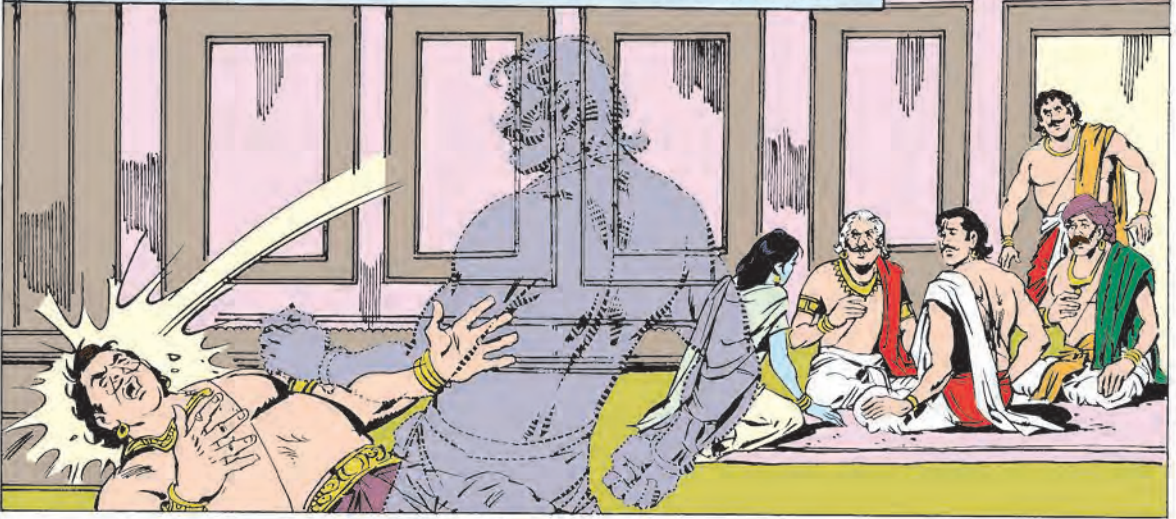
"SENSING HER ANGER, KEECHAKA TRIED TO GRAB HOLD OF DRAUPADI. BUT TREMBLING WITH RAGE, SHE DASHED HIM TO THE GROUND AND FLED.



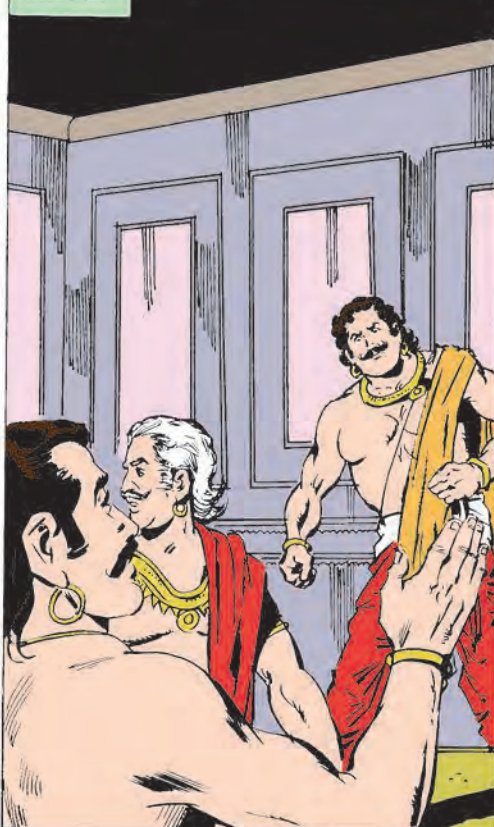
"DRAUPADI CAME RUSHING TO THE COURT OF VIRATA WHERE THE KING WAS PLAYING A GAME OF DICE WITH YUDHISHTHIRA. KEECHAKA CAME RUNNING AFTER HER AND KICKED HER IN THE PRESENCE OF ALL.



"THEREUPON, THE INVISIBLE RAKSHASA APPOINTED BY SURYA TO PROTECT DRAUPADI, GAVE KEECHAKA A MIGHTY BLOW. KEECHAKA FELL DOWN UNCONSCIOUS."



"BHEEMA WHO WAS PRESENT GNASHED HIS TEETH AND WAS READY TO FLY AT THE THROAT OF KEECHAKA. BUT YUDHISHTHIRA, FEARING DISCOVERY, SIGNALLED TO BHEEMA TO CONTROL HIS ANGER."



"BUT DRAUPADI, STILL TREMBLING UNDER THE AFFRONT TO HER WOMANHOOD, TURNED TO KING VIRATA AND SAID —

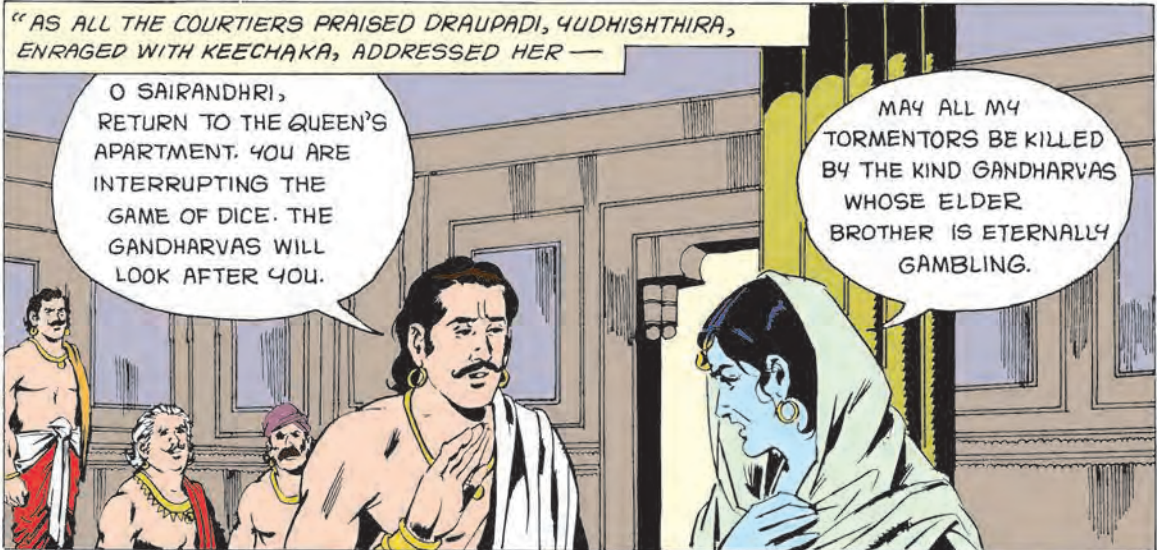
O KING! YOU HAVE OCCUPIED THE SEAT OF JUSTICE. I AM AN INNOCENT AND WEAK WOMAN. YOU HAVE SEEN KEECHAKA KICKING ME AND TREATING ME LIKE A SLAVE. PROTECT ME FROM THIS EVIL MAN, O KING OF MATSYA.



"HEARING HER, KING VIRATA SAID —



"AS ALL THE COURTIER'S PRAISED DRAUPADI, YUDHISHTHIRA, ENRAGED WITH KEECHAKA, ADDRESSED HER —



"COVERED WITH DUST AND WITH HER HAIR LOOSE, DRAUPADI WALKED AWAY TO SUDESHNA'S APARTMENT.



"THEN —

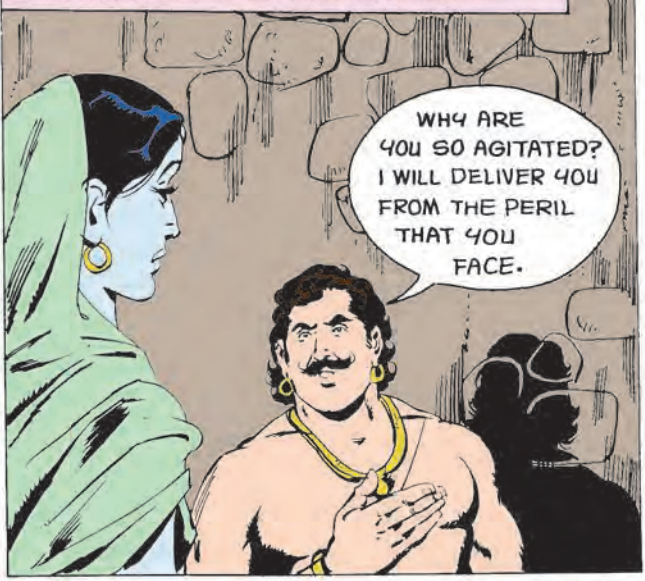


"THAT NIGHT DRAUPADI WENT TO BHEEMA-



BHEEMA! HOW CAN YOU SLEEP IN PEACE WHEN YOUR WIFE HAS BEEN INSULTED BY THE WICKED WRETCH?

"THUS AWAKENED, BHEEMA ENQUIRED —

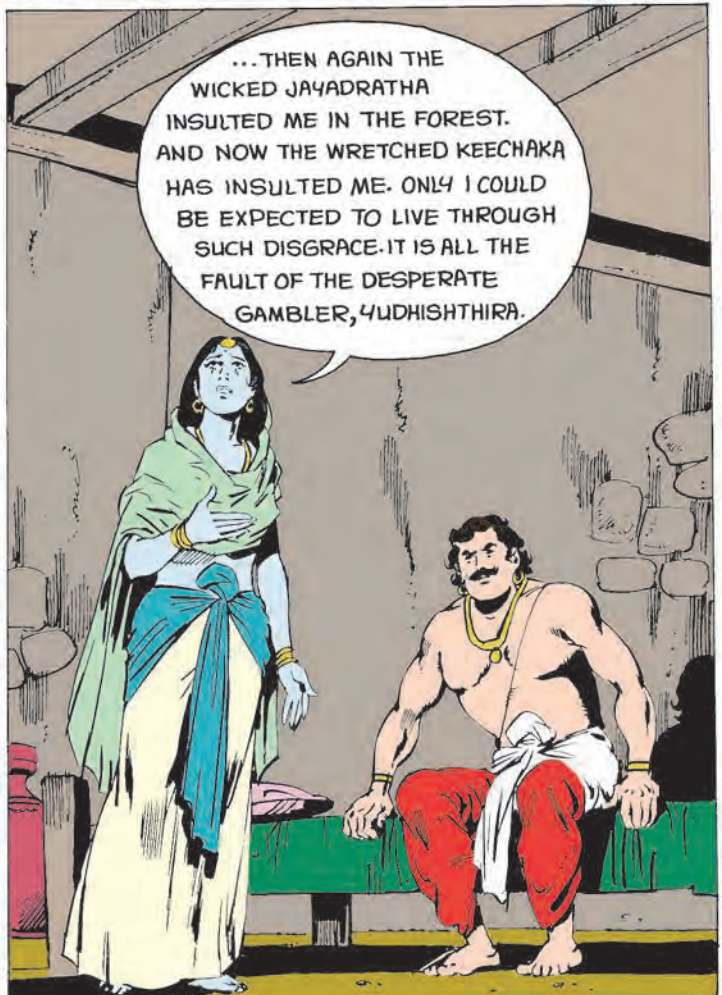


WHY ARE YOU SO AGITATED? I WILL DELIVER YOU FROM THE PERIL THAT YOU FACE.

WITH YUDHISHTHIRA FOR A HUSBAND, I WILL NEVER BE FREE FROM GRIEF. THE INSULT HEAPED ON ME AT THE COURT OF THE KURUS AFTER THE GAME OF DICE STILL RANKLES IN ME. WHO ELSE BUT DRAUPADI WOULD LIVE TO SUFFER SUCH MISERY...



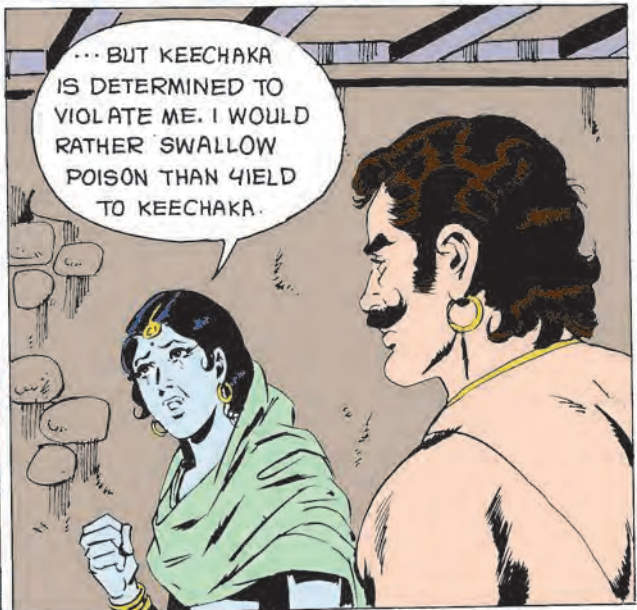
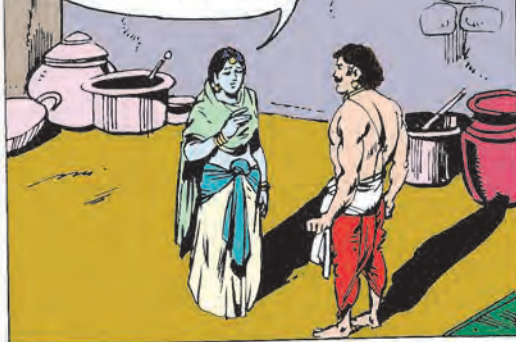
...THEN AGAIN THE WICKED JAYADRATHA INSULTED ME IN THE FOREST. AND NOW THE WRETCHED KEECHAKA HAS INSULTED ME. ONLY I COULD BE EXPECTED TO LIVE THROUGH SUCH DISGRACE. IT IS ALL THE FAULT OF THE DESPERATE GAMBLER, YUDHISHTHIRA.





"HEARING BHEEMA'S WORDS, DRAUPADI SAID —

O BHEEMA, UNABLE TO BEAR MY GRIEF ALONE, I SHED TEARS. I AM CENSURING YUDHISHTHIRA FOR I KNOW IT IS USELESS TO DWELL IN THE PAST...



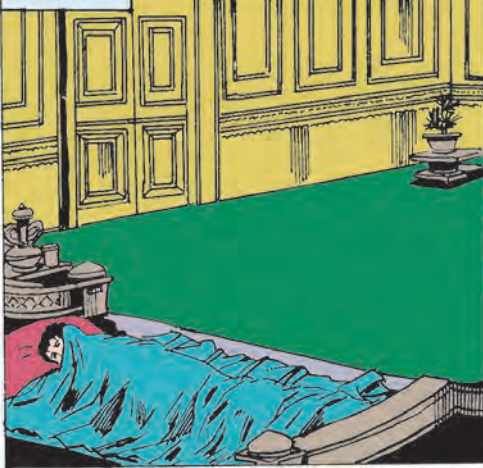
"DRAUPADI HID HER FACE IN BHEEMA'S SHOULDER AND WEPT. WIPING HER TEARS, BHEEMA TOOK A VOW.

I WILL KILL THE WRETCHED KEECHAKA AND ALL HIS FRIENDS! ARRANGE A MEETING WITH HIM TONIGHT AT THE DANCING HALL AND LEAVE THE REST TO ME.

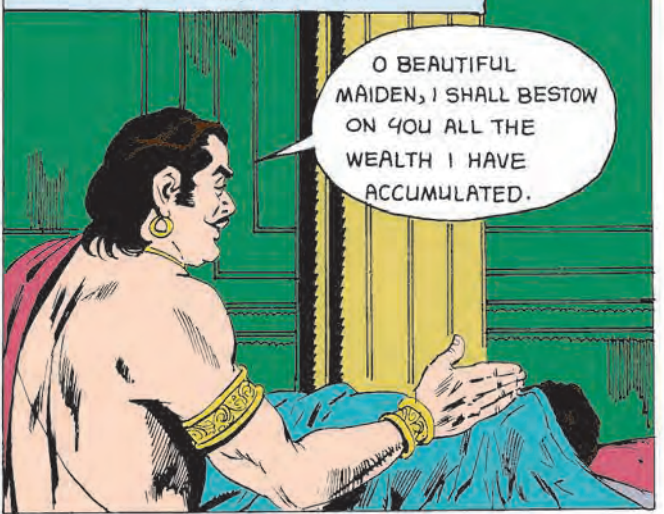


*A CASTE ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION OF CHARIOTEERING.

"THAT NIGHT BHEEMA WAITED IN THE DANCING HALL FOR KEECHAKA TO ARRIVE."



"FINALLY WHEN KEECHAKA CAME —"



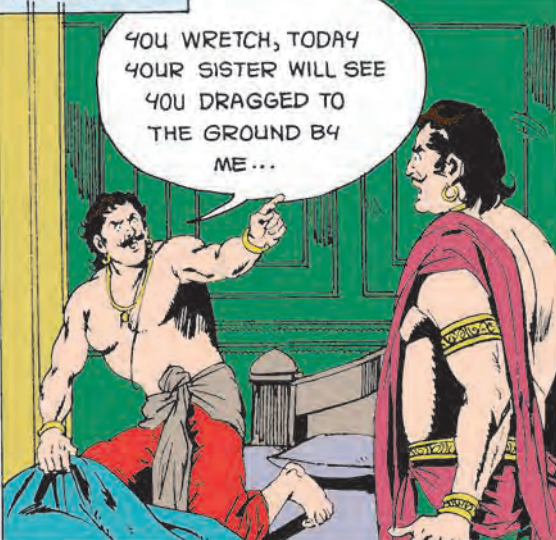
O BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN, I SHALL BESTOW ON YOU ALL THE WEALTH I HAVE ACCUMULATED.

HAVING LEFT ALL MY WORK UNFINISHED, I HAVE HASTENED TO BE AT YOUR SIDE.



YOU ARE SO GALLANT, MY LORD! THERE IS NONE LIKE YOU IN THIS WORLD.

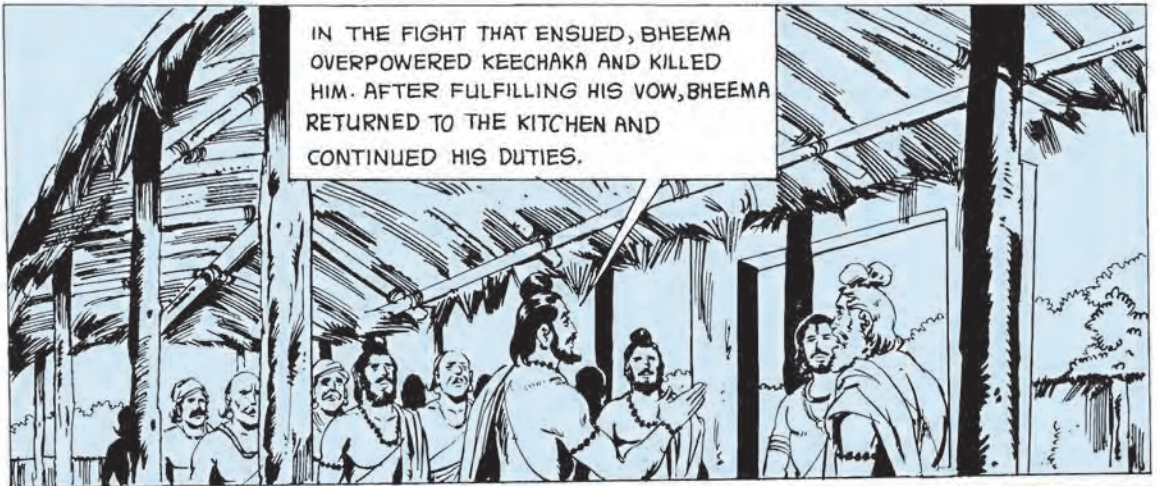
"SAYING THIS BHEEMA SUDDENLY ROSE AND ROARED —"



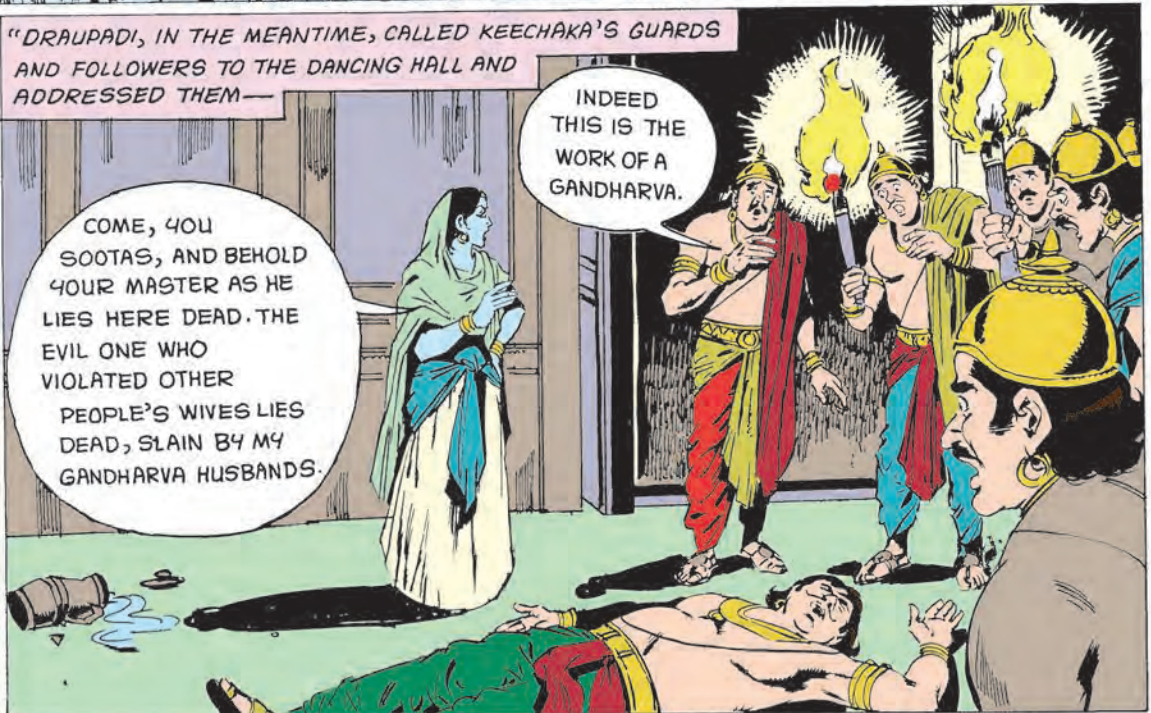
YOU WRETCH, TODAY YOUR SISTER WILL SEE YOU DRAGGED TO THE GROUND BY ME...

...ONLY AFTER HAVING SLAIN YOU WILL THE SAIRANDHRI AND HER HUSBANDS KNOW PEACE.





"DRAUPADI, IN THE MEANTIME, CALLED KEECHAKA'S GUARDS AND FOLLOWERS TO THE DANCING HALL AND ADDRESSED THEM—



"THEN KEECHAKA'S FOLLOWERS BEGAN TO WAIL LOUDLY.



"SUDDENLY ONE OF THE FOLLOWERS OF KEECHAKA SAID —



KING VIRATA WAS TOLD OF THE PLANS. HE AGREED, KNOWING THE POWER OF THE SOOTAS. SO A PROCESSION WAS TAKEN OUT TOWARDS THE CREMATION GROUND.



"WHEN BHEEMA HEARD ABOUT THIS, HIS BODY SWELLED WITH RAGE..."



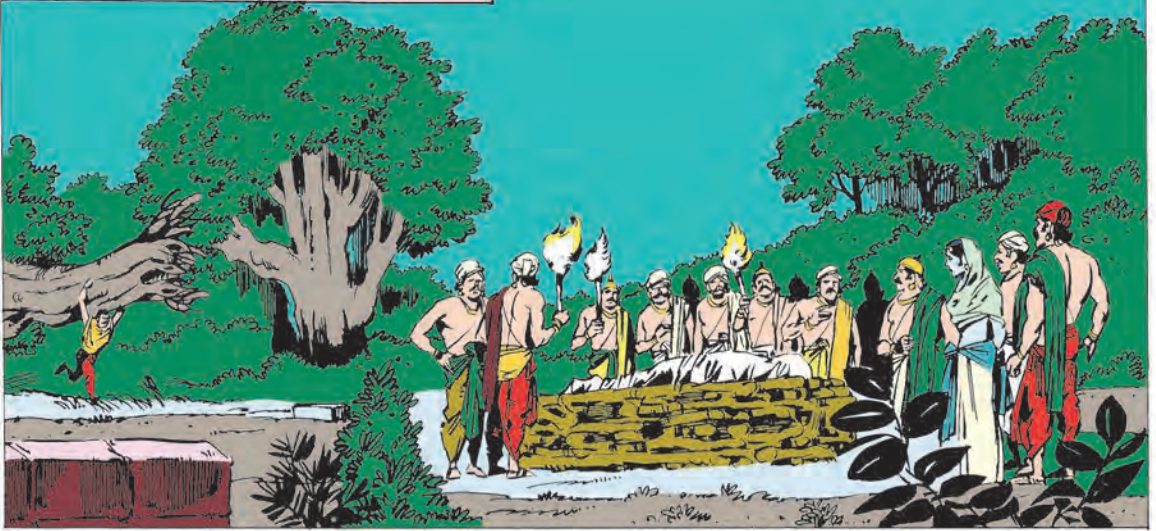
"... AFTER CHANGING HIS ATTIRE, HE SECRETLY LET HIMSELF OUT OF THE PALACE AND PROCEEDED TOWARDS THE CREMATION GROUND.



"ON THE WAY HE UPROOTED A MIGHTY TREE AND PLACED IT ON HIS SHOULDER.



"AT THE CREMATION GROUND BHEEMA RUSHED TOWARDS THE SOOTAS WITH THE TREE TRUNK IN HIS HANDS.



"THE SOOTAS RAN HELTER-SKELTER, SCREAMING.



"AFTER SLAYING THE SOOTAS, BHEEMA FREED DRAUPADI AND CONSOLED HER.



YOU NEED NOT FEAR ANY MORE. RETURN TO THE CITY IN PEACE. I MYSELF WILL GO TO THE KITCHEN BY ANOTHER ROUTE.

"SAIRANDHRI RETURNED TO THE CITY. ON HEARING OF HER ARRIVAL, THE MAIDENS FROM THE DANCING HALL, ALONG WITH ARJUNA, CAME TO MEET HER.

IT IS GOOD THAT YOUR TORMENTOR HAS BEEN KILLED AND YOU ARE SAFELY BACK WITH US.

"KING VIRATA AND SUDESHNA GOT TO KNOW OF SAIRANDHRI'S ROLE IN THE KILLING OF KEECHAKA.

SAIRANDHRI! WE ARE AFRAID OF THE WRATH OF YOUR GANDHARVA HUSBANDS ON OUR KINGDOM. YOU MAY NOW LEAVE US AND GO WHERE YOU PLEASE.

PLEASE WAIT FOR THIRTEEN MORE DAYS. BY THEN THE GANDHARVAS WILL NOT ONLY HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THEIR TASK, BUT WILL ALSO REPAY YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS.

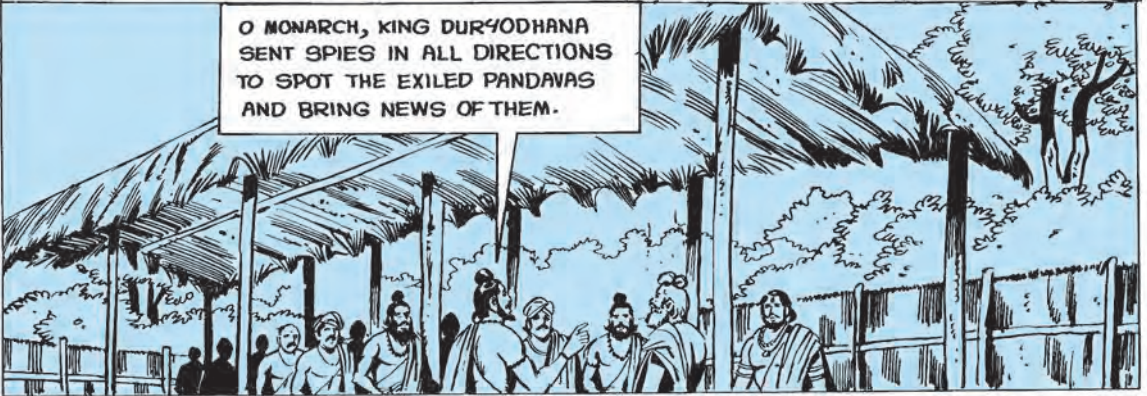
STAY IF YOU WILL. BUT PROTECT MY HUSBAND AND SONS, I BESEECH YOU.

THUS ENDS THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, THE MAHABHARATA.

Mahabharata - 26

PANIC IN THE KAURAVA CAMP

O MONARCH, KING DURYODHANA SENT SPIES IN ALL DIRECTIONS TO SPOT THE EXILED PANDAVAS AND BRING NEWS OF THEM.

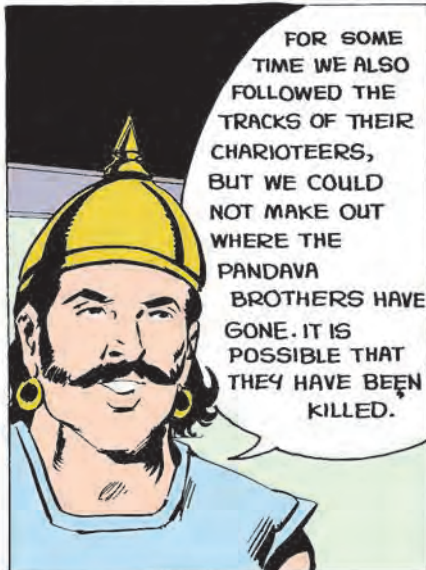


"AFTER SEARCHING FAR AND WIDE, THE SPIES CAME BACK TO HASTINAPURA AND REPORTED TO DURYODHANA—"

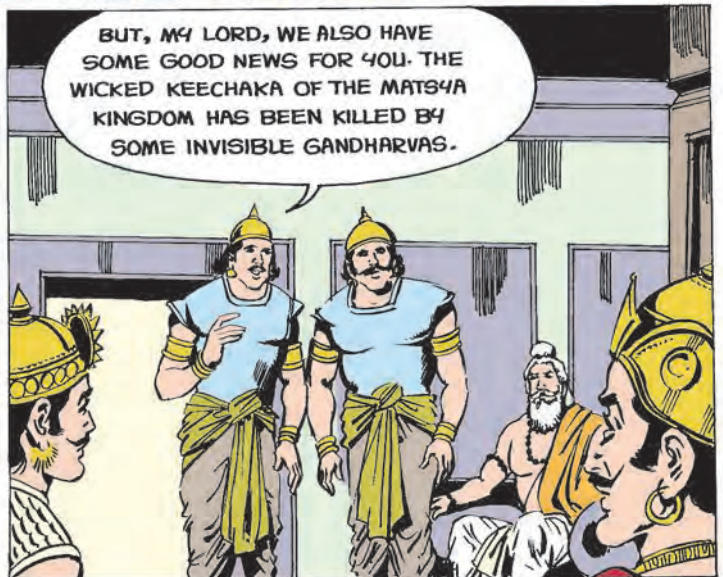
O LORD, WE HAVE SEARCHED FOR THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE PANDAVAS IN THE DEEP WOODS, BUT FOUND NO CLUE TO THE PATH THEY TOOK.

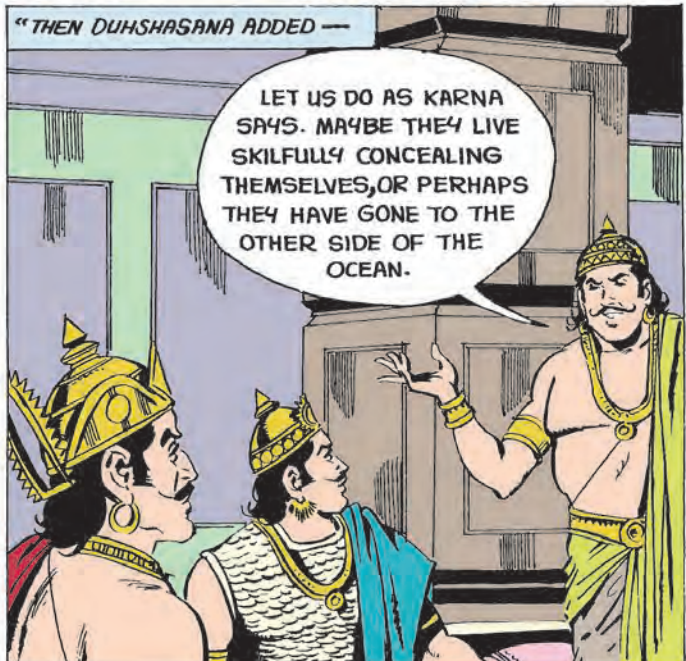
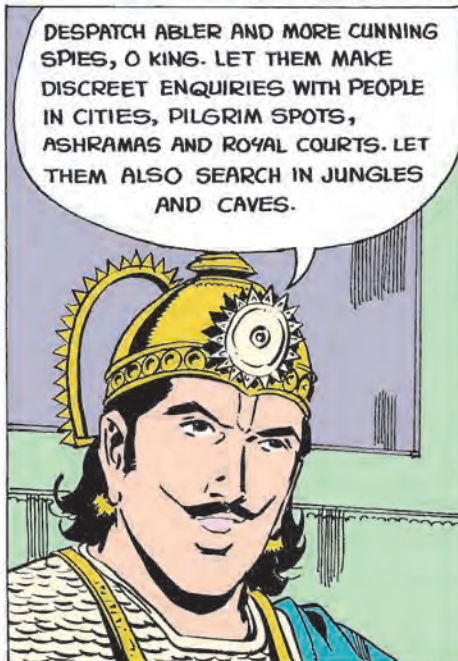
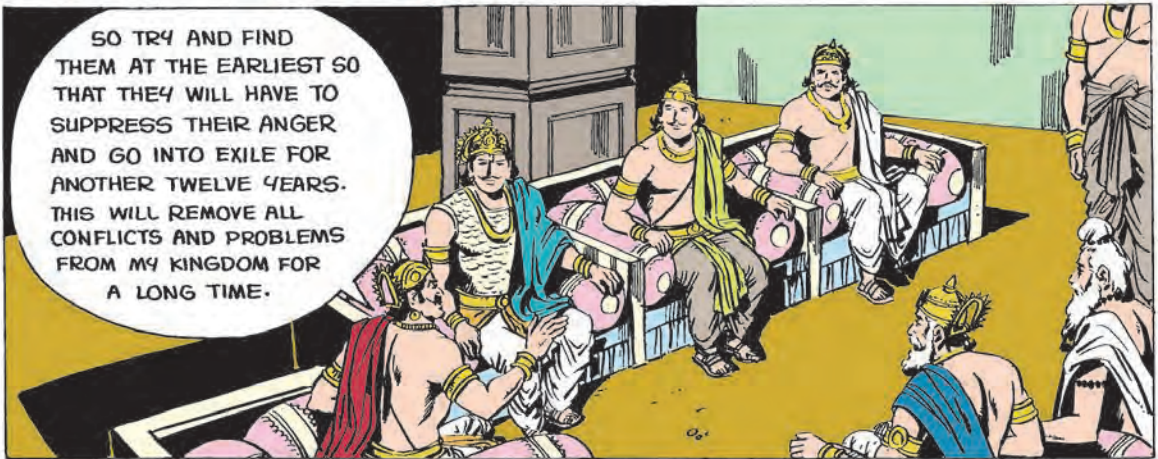
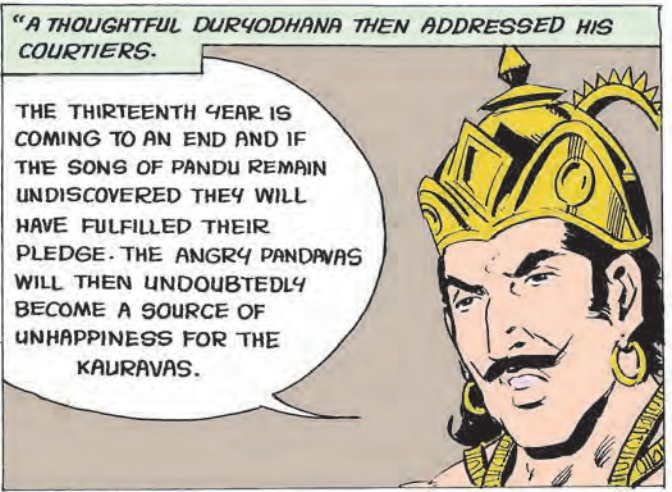
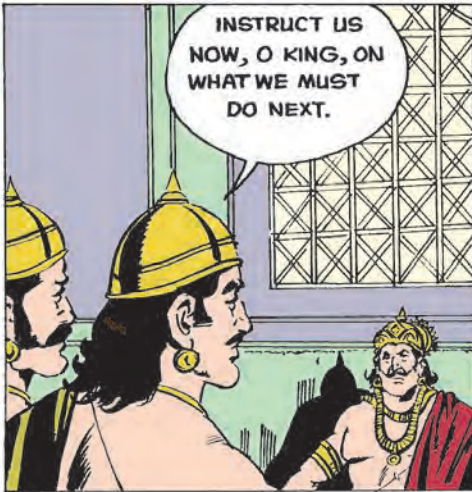


FOR SOME TIME WE ALSO FOLLOWED THE TRACKS OF THEIR CHARIOTEERS, BUT WE COULD NOT MAKE OUT WHERE THE PANDAVA BROTHERS HAVE GONE. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THEY HAVE BEEN KILLED.



BUT, MY LORD, WE ALSO HAVE SOME GOOD NEWS FOR YOU: THE WICKED KEECHAKA OF THE MATSYA KINGDOM HAS BEEN KILLED BY SOME INVISIBLE GANDHARVAS.





THEY MAY HAVE PERISHED, OR THEY HAVE POSSIBLY BEEN DEVoured BY SOME WILD BEASTS. O KING, DISPEL ALL ANXIETY FROM YOUR HEART AND CONDUCT YOURSELF AS USUAL.

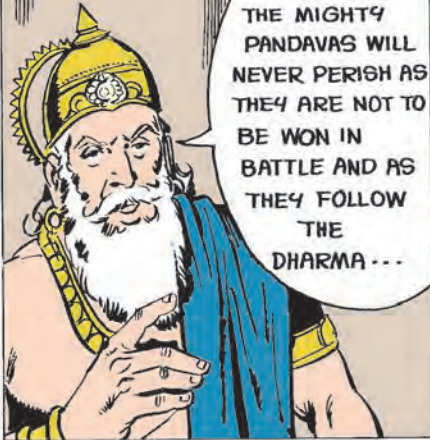


PERSONS LIKE THE PANDAVAS CAN NEITHER PERISH NOR MEET WITH FAILURE AS THEY HONOUR AND OBEY YUDHISHTHIRA. I SUGGEST A SEARCH SHOULD BE INSTITUTED FOR THEM BY MEN WHO CAN RECOGNISE THEM.

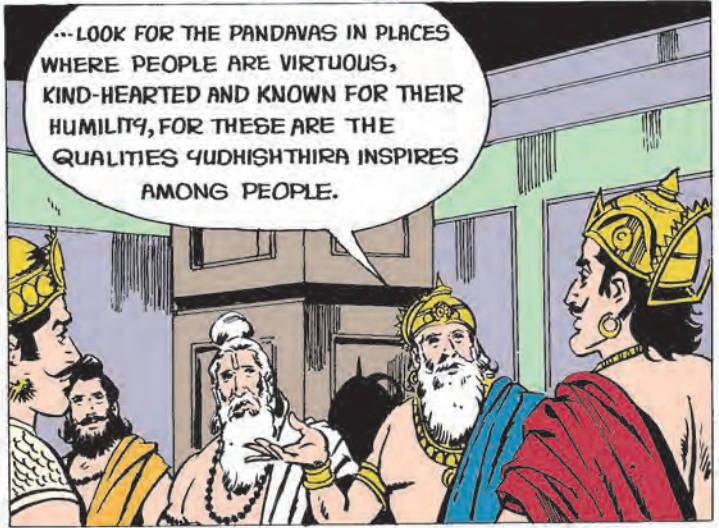


"BHEESHMA ADDED—

I AGREE WITH DRONA. THE MIGHTY PANDAVAS WILL NEVER PERISH AS THEY ARE NOT TO BE WON IN BATTLE AND AS THEY FOLLOW THE DHARMA...

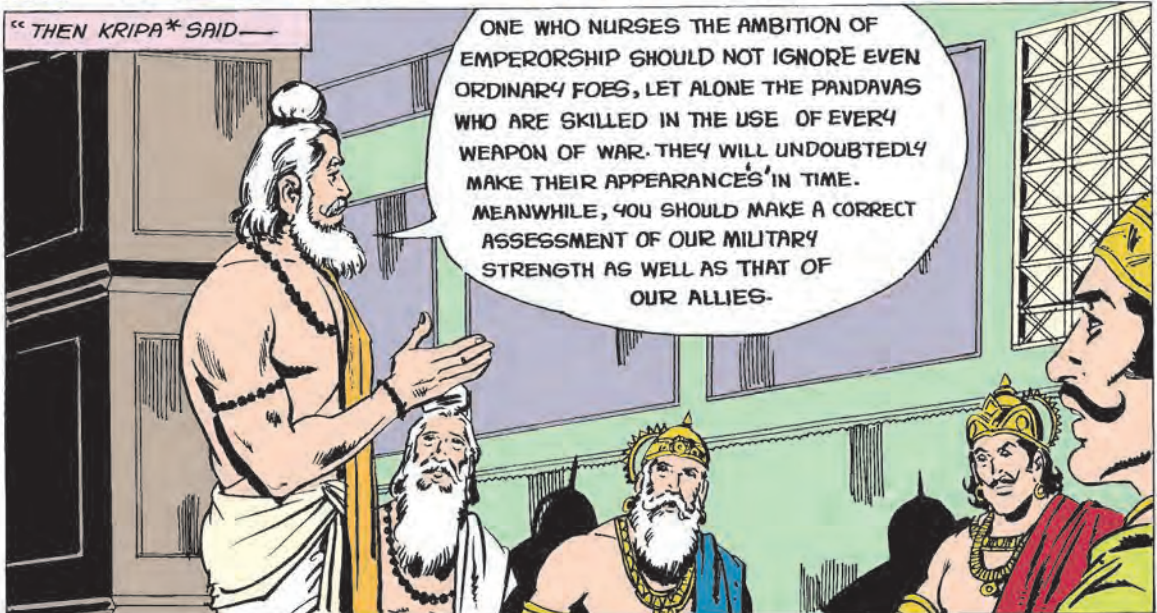


...LOOK FOR THE PANDAVAS IN PLACES WHERE PEOPLE ARE VIRTUOUS, KIND-HEARTED AND KNOWN FOR THEIR HUMILITY, FOR THESE ARE THE QUALITIES YUDHISHTHIRA INSPIRES AMONG PEOPLE.



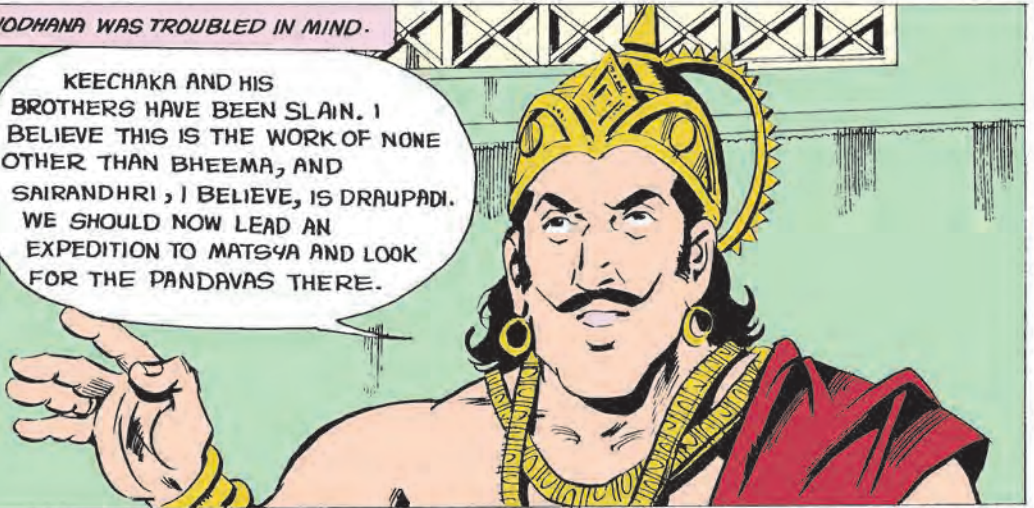
"THEN KRIPA* SAID—

ONE WHO NURSES THE AMBITION OF EMPERORSHIP SHOULD NOT IGNORE EVEN ORDINARY FOES, LET ALONE THE PANDAVAS WHO ARE SKILLED IN THE USE OF EVERY WEAPON OF WAR. THEY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY MAKE THEIR APPEARANCES IN TIME. MEANWHILE, YOU SHOULD MAKE A CORRECT ASSESSMENT OF OUR MILITARY STRENGTH AS WELL AS THAT OF OUR ALLIES.



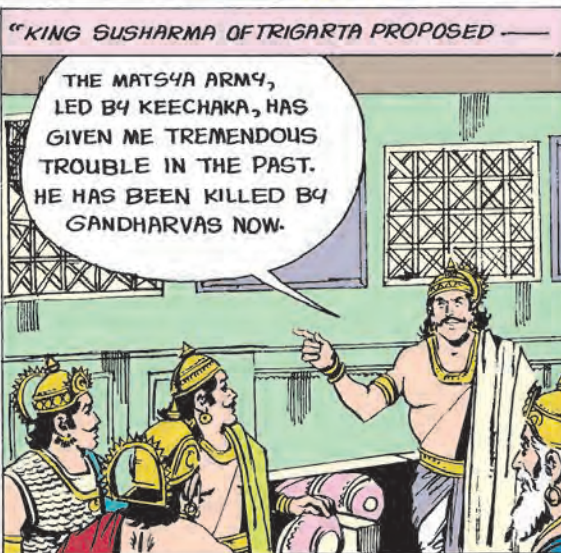
"BUT DURYODHANA WAS TROUBLED IN MIND."

KEECHAKA AND HIS BROTHERS HAVE BEEN SLAIN. I BELIEVE THIS IS THE WORK OF NONE OTHER THAN BHEEMA, AND SAIRANDHRI, I BELIEVE, IS DRAUPADI. WE SHOULD NOW LEAD AN EXPEDITION TO MATSYA AND LOOK FOR THE PANDAVAS THERE.

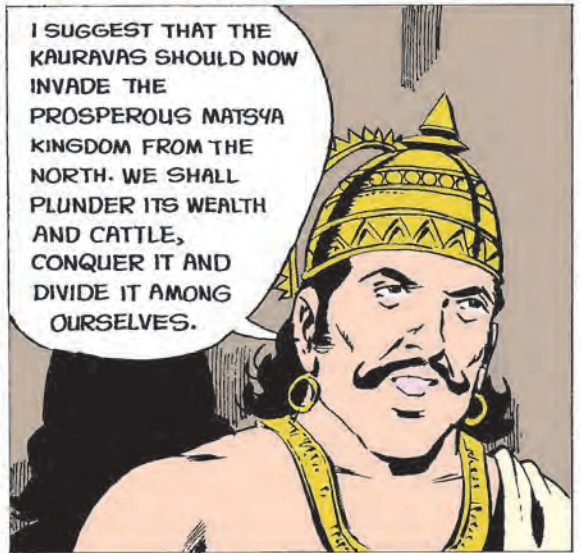


"KING SUSHARMA OF TRIGARTA PROPOSED —"

THE MATSYA ARMY, LED BY KEECHAKA, HAS GIVEN ME TREMENDOUS TROUBLE IN THE PAST. HE HAS BEEN KILLED BY GANDHARVAS NOW.

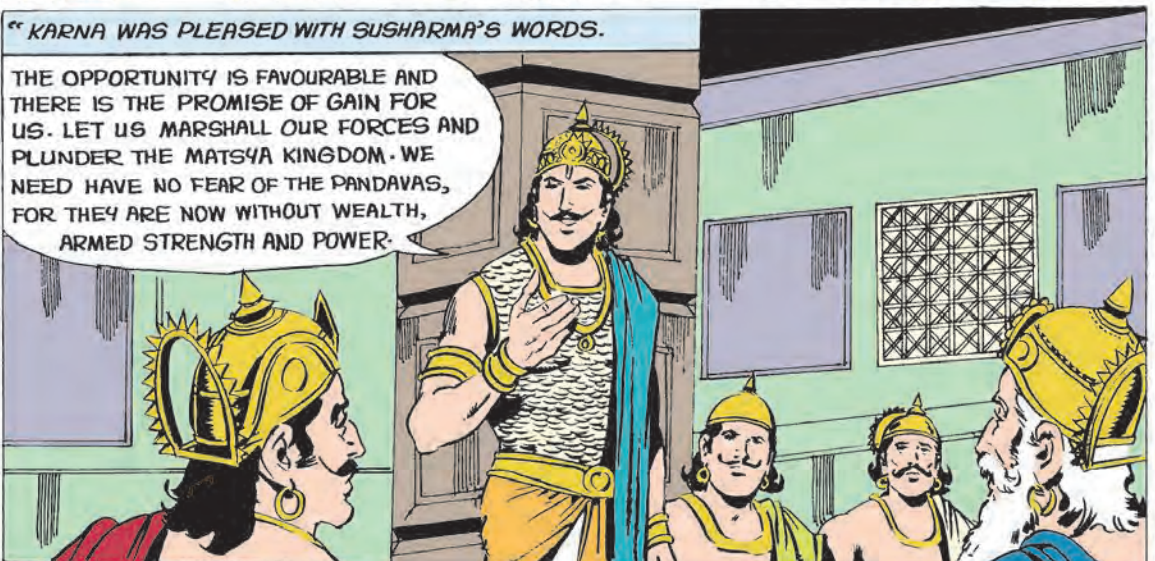


I SUGGEST THAT THE KAURAVAS SHOULD NOW INVADE THE PROSPEROUS MATSYA KINGDOM FROM THE NORTH. WE SHALL PLUNDER ITS WEALTH AND CATTLE, CONQUER IT AND DIVIDE IT AMONG OURSELVES.



"KARNA WAS PLEASED WITH SUSHARMA'S WORDS."

THE OPPORTUNITY IS FAVOURABLE AND THERE IS THE PROMISE OF GAIN FOR US. LET US MARSHALL OUR FORCES AND PLUNDER THE MATSYA KINGDOM. WE NEED HAVE NO FEAR OF THE PANDAVAS, FOR THEY ARE NOW WITHOUT WEALTH, ARMED STRENGTH AND POWER.

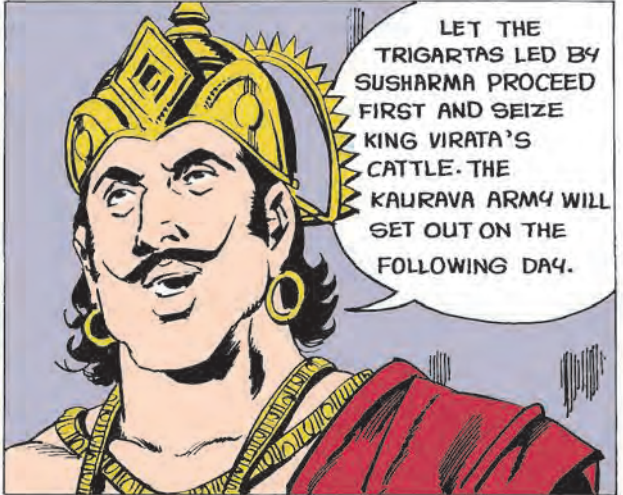


"AGREEING TO THE ADVICE, DURYODHANA INSTRUCTED DUHSHASANA.

GET OUR FORCES IN ARRAY RIGHT NOW AND PREPARE TO MARCH TOWARDS THE MATSYA KINGDOM.

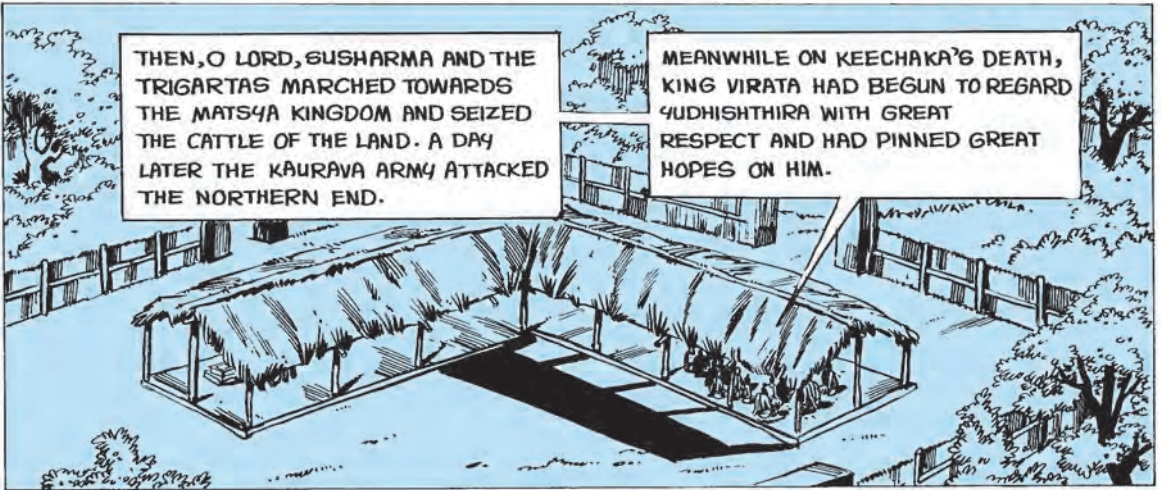


LET THE TRIGARTAS LED BY SUSHARMA PROCEED FIRST AND SEIZE KING VIRATA'S CATTLE. THE KAURAVA ARMY WILL GET OUT ON THE FOLLOWING DAY.



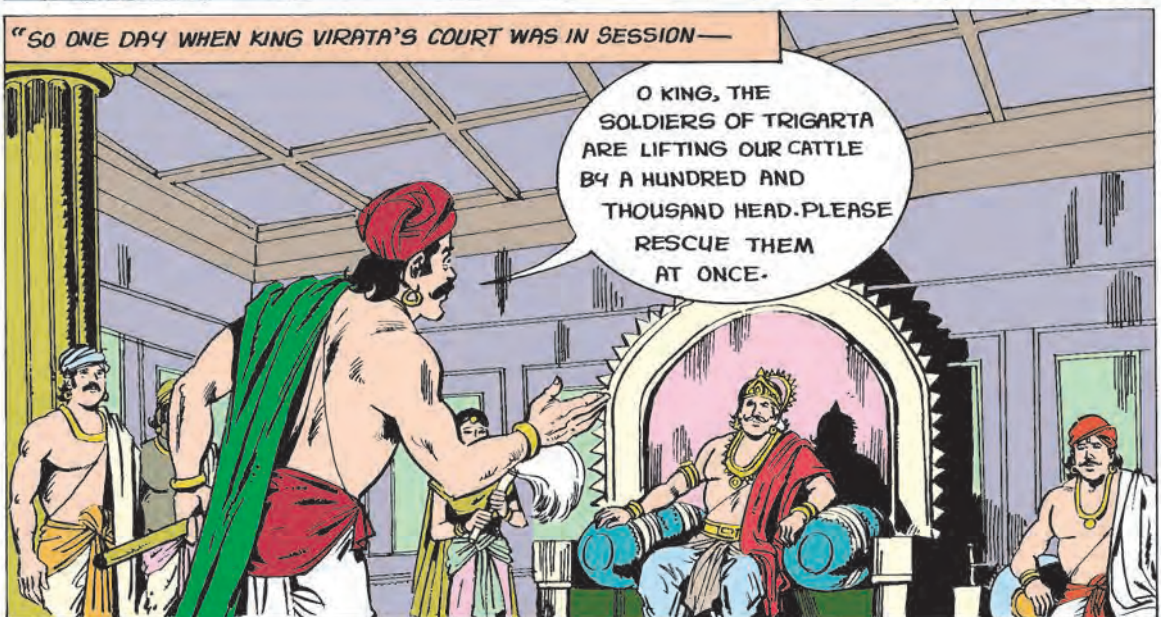
THEN, O LORD, SUSHARMA AND THE TRIGARTAS MARCHED TOWARDS THE MATSYA KINGDOM AND SEIZED THE CATTLE OF THE LAND. A DAY LATER THE KAURAVA ARMY ATTACKED THE NORTHERN END.

MEANWHILE ON KEECHAKA'S DEATH, KING VIRATA HAD BEGUN TO REGARD YUDHISHTHIRA WITH GREAT RESPECT AND HAD PINNED GREAT HOPES ON HIM.



"SO ONE DAY WHEN KING VIRATA'S COURT WAS IN SESSION—

O KING, THE SOLDIERS OF TRIGARTA ARE LIFTING OUR CATTLE BY A HUNDRED AND THOUSAND HEAD. PLEASE RESCUE THEM AT ONCE.



"KING VIRATA HASTILY GATHERED TOGETHER HIS BRAVE SOLDIERS AND PRINCES. AND, AS THE CHARIOTS WERE BEING YOKED, VIRATA SAID TO HIS BROTHER SHATANEKA —

SHATANEKA, I AM CONVINCED THAT KANKA, BALLAVA, TANTIPALA AND GRANTHIKA CAN ALSO JOIN IN THE BATTLE. GIVE THEM CHARIOTS FURNISHED WITH BANNERS, COATS OF MAIL AND WEAPONS.

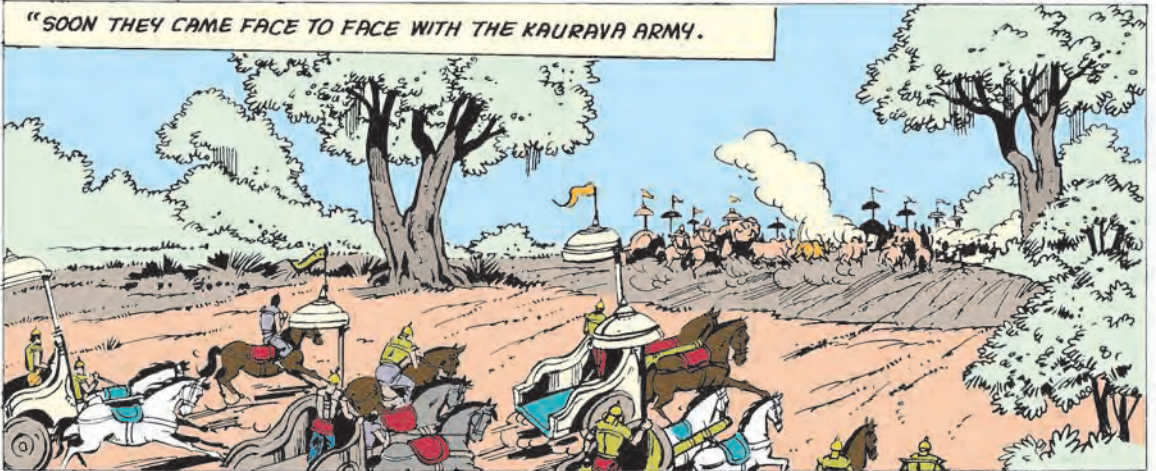
I WILL.



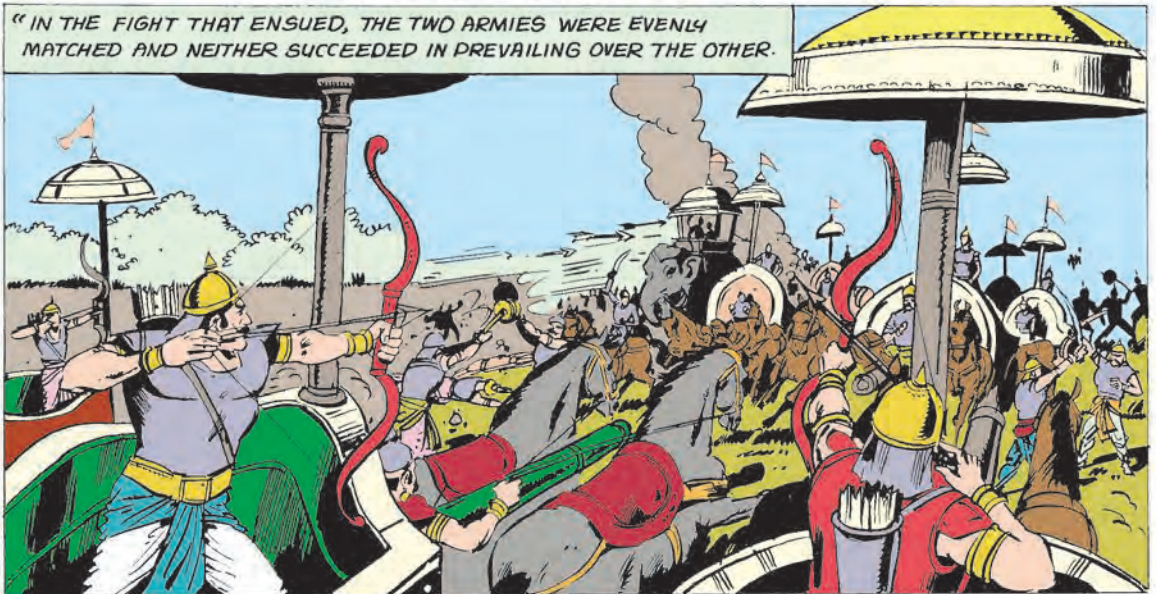
"THE PANDAVAS THUS JOINED THE ARMY.



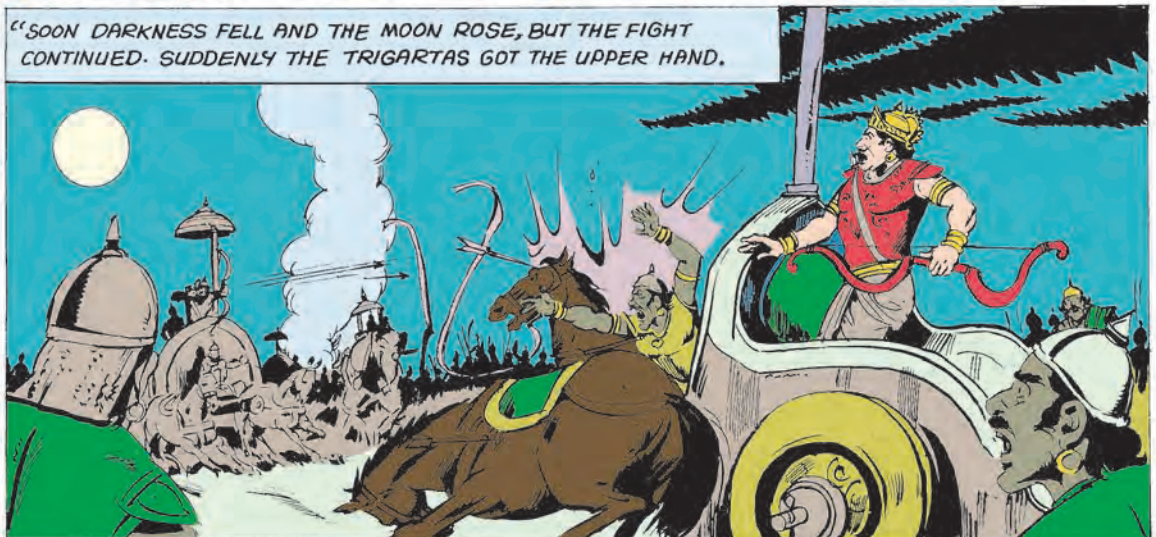
"SOON THEY CAME FACE TO FACE WITH THE KAURAVA ARMY."



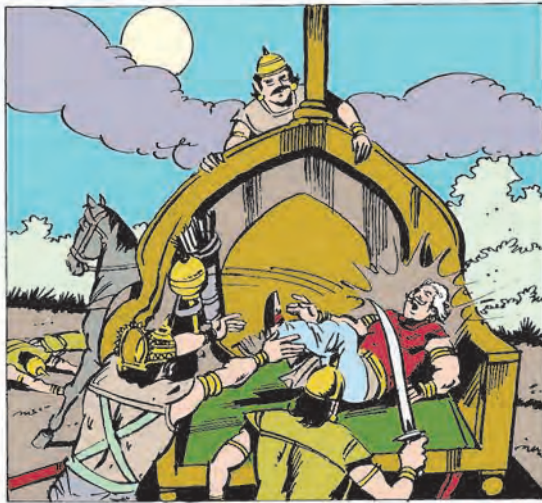
"IN THE FIGHT THAT ENSUED, THE TWO ARMIES WERE EVENLY MATCHED AND NEITHER SUCCEEDED IN PREVAILING OVER THE OTHER."



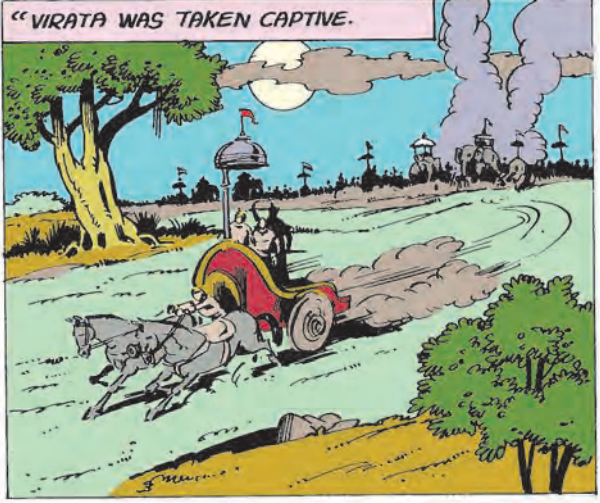
"SOON DARKNESS FELL AND THE MOON ROSE, BUT THE FIGHT CONTINUED. SUDDENLY THE TRIGARTAS GOT THE UPPER HAND."



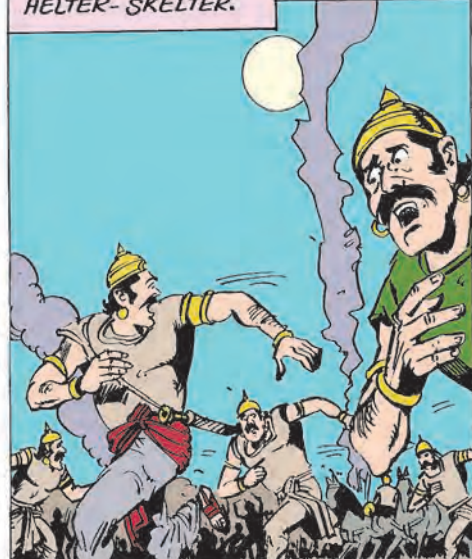
"AND SOON —



"VIRATA WAS TAKEN CAPTIVE.

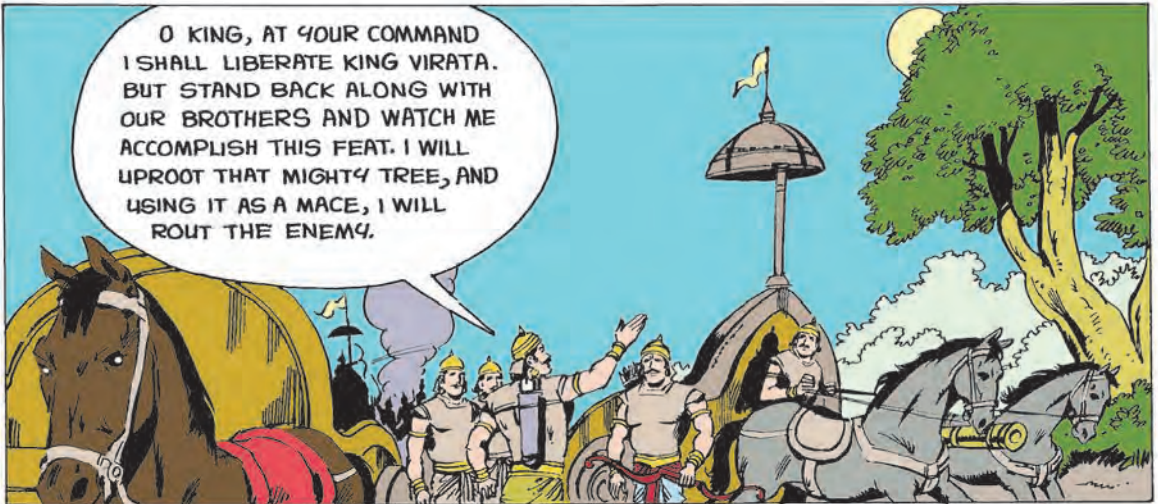


"THERE WAS PANIC IN THE MATSYA ARMY AND THE SOLDIERS RAN HELTER-SKELTER.

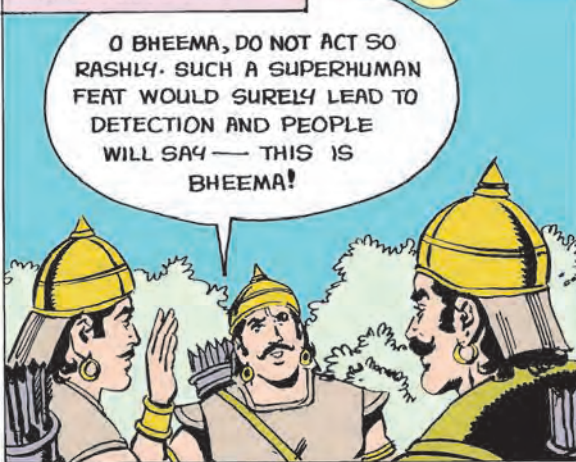


"SEEING THE TURMOIL, YUDHISHTHIRA ADDRESSED BHEEMA —

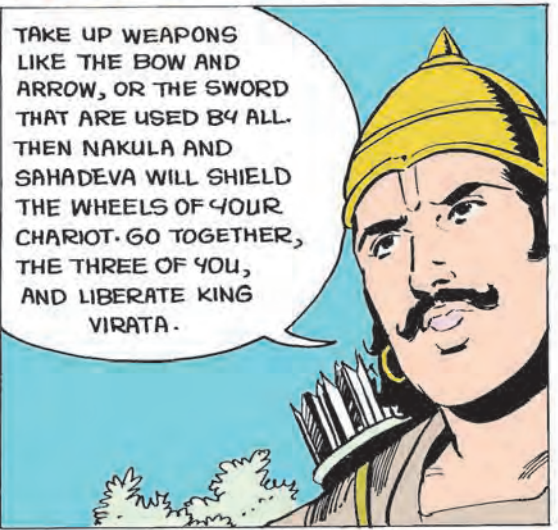




"BEHOLDING THE FIERCE LOOK ON BHEEMA'S FACE, YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—



TAKE UP WEAPONS LIKE THE BOW AND ARROW, OR THE SWORD THAT ARE USED BY ALL. THEN NAKULA AND SAHADEVA WILL SHIELD THE WHEELS OF YOUR CHARIOT. GO TOGETHER, THE THREE OF YOU, AND LIBERATE KING VIRATA.

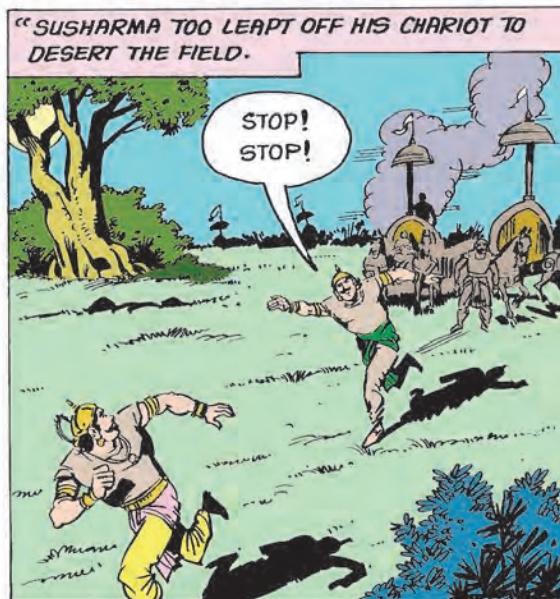
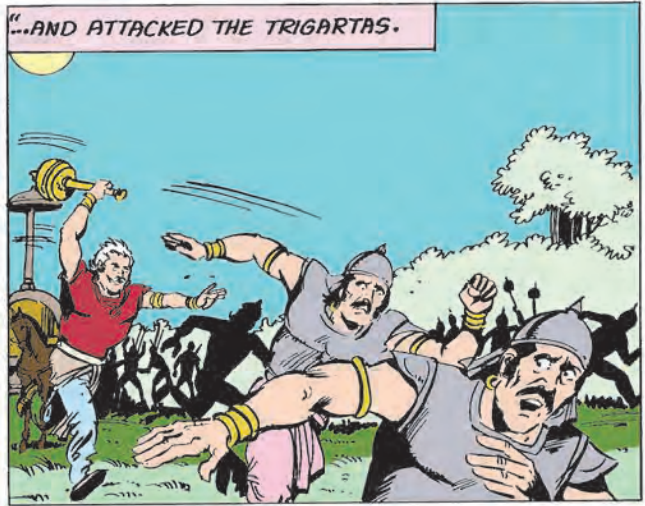
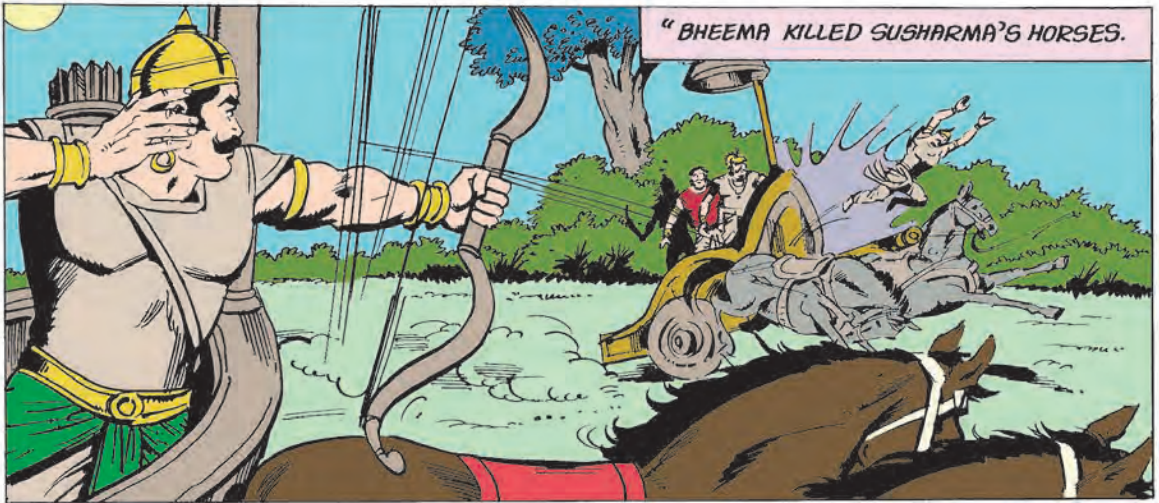


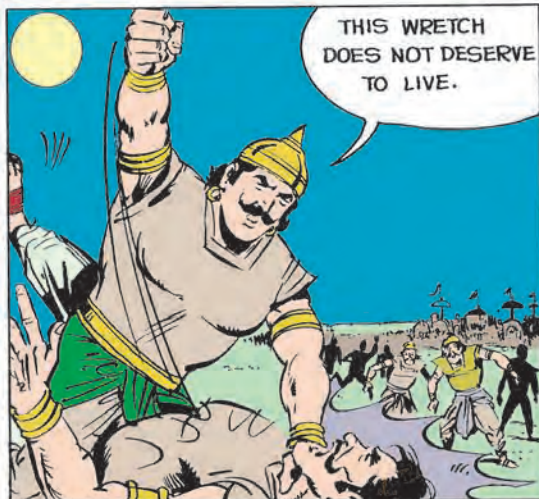
"BHEEMA THEN STARTED SHOWERING ARROWS ON THE ENEMY.



"INSPIRED BY THE ADVANCING PANDAVAS, THE FLEEING MATSYA ARMY RETURNED TO THE BATTLEFIELD.







"TURNING TO SUSHARMA, YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

GO ! YOU ARE FREE. BUT REFRAIN FROM SUCH ACTS IN FUTURE.



"OVERWHELMED WITH SHAME, SUSHARMA PAID HIS RESPECT TO VIRATA AND PROCEEDED TO HIS OWN KINGDOM.



"KING VIRATA THEN ADDRESSED THE PANDAVAS.

YOU HAVE RESCUED ME FROM THE CLUTCHES OF THE ENEMY. YOU ARE NOW MASTERS OF MY KINGDOM AND MY WEALTH. KANKA, I WISH TO CROWN YOU KING.

WE ARE HAPPY THAT YOU ARE FREE, O KING. ALL I WISH IS YOUR SAFE ENTRY INTO YOUR CAPITAL AND A HAPPY REUNION WITH YOUR FAMILY.

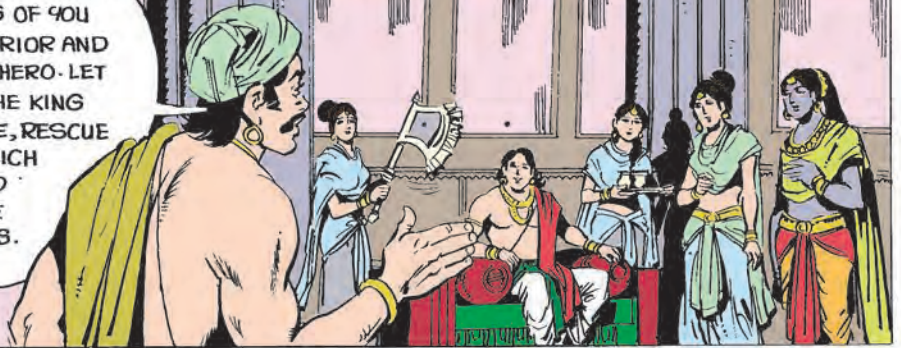


BUT, O MONARCH, WHILE VIRATA WAS BUSY RECOVERING HIS COWS FROM THE TRIGARTAS, DURYODHANA AND HIS COUNSELLORS INVADDED THE MATSYA KINGDOM FROM THE NORTHERN FRONT. AND SIXTY THOUSAND HEAD OF CATTLE WERE LED AWAY.



"THE CHIEF OF THE COWHERDS APPEALED TO UTTARA, SON OF KING VIRATA —

O PRINCE, YOUR FATHER ALWAYS SPEAKS OF YOU AS A GREAT WARRIOR AND A COURAGEOUS HERO. LET THE WORDS OF THE KING COME TRUE. COME, RESCUE OUR CATTLE WHICH ARE BEING LED AWAY BY THE KAURAVAS.



I WOULD HAVE SET OUT RIGHT AWAY IF I HAD A SKILLED CHARIOTEER TO GUIDE MY HORSES. MY OWN CHARIOTEER HAS BEEN SLAIN IN BATTLE.



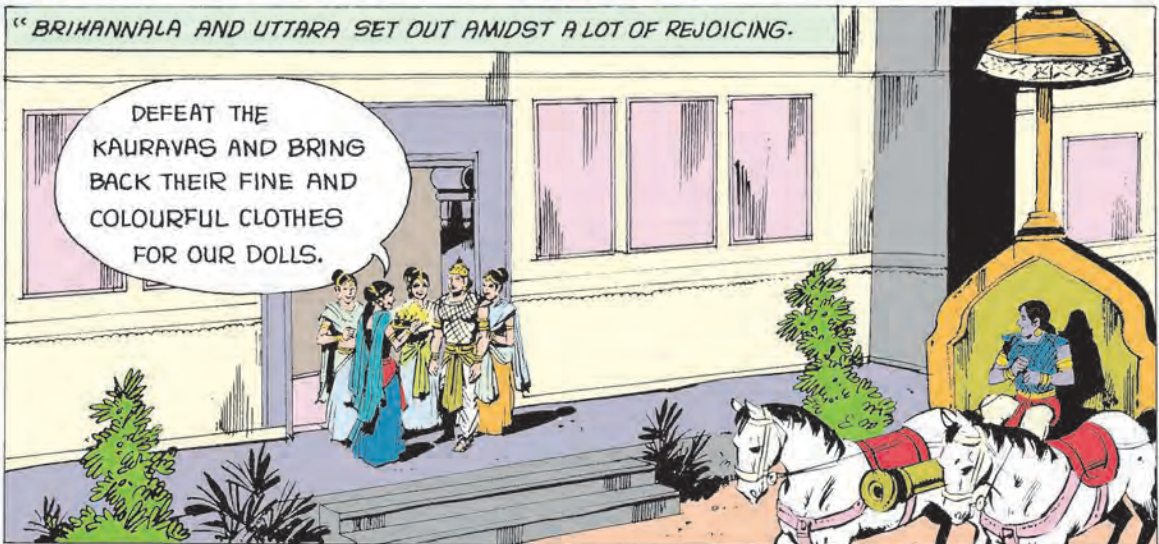
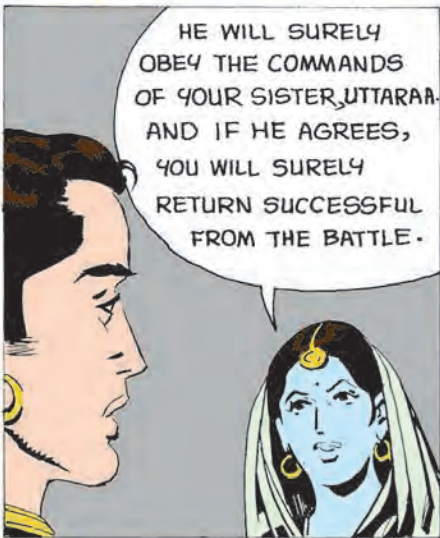
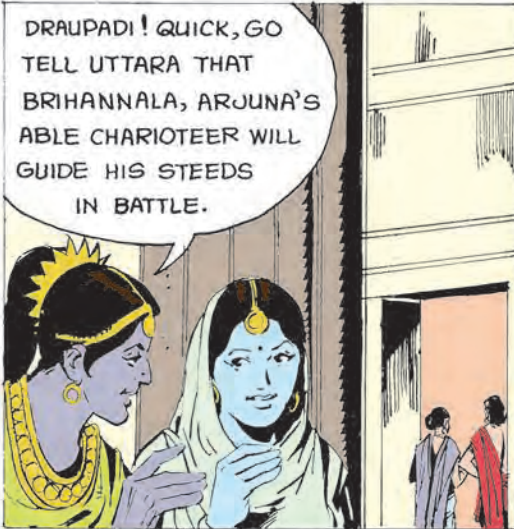
BUT ONCE I FIND A GOOD CHARIOTEER, I WILL ENTER THE BATTLEFIELD AND DESTROY THE KAURAVAS, AND THEN BRING BACK THE CATTLE. AS SUCH, I AM HELPLESS. OTHERWISE...

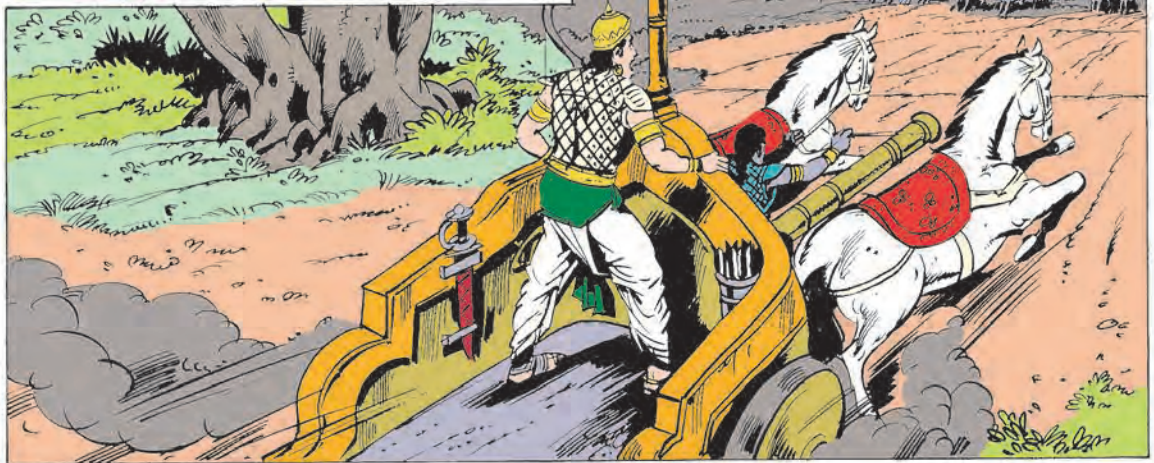
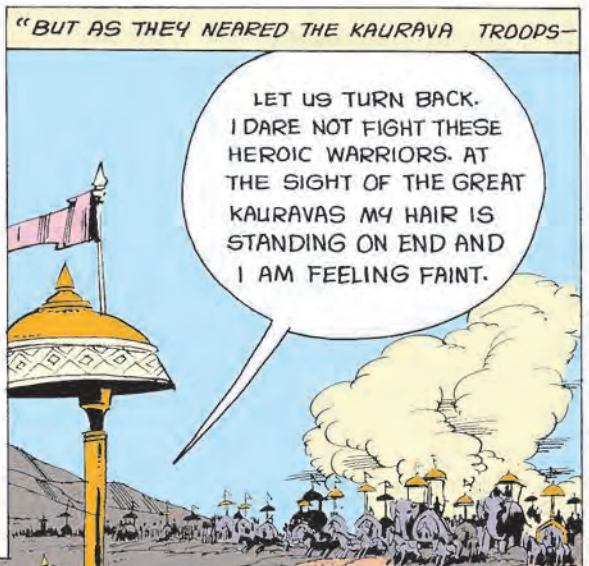
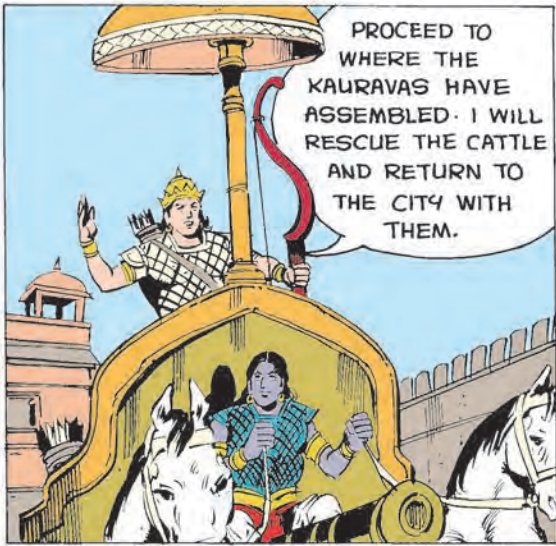


...ON SEEING MY PROWESS, THE KAURAVAS WILL SAY, IS IT ARJUNA WHO IS CAUSING US SO MUCH TROUBLE?

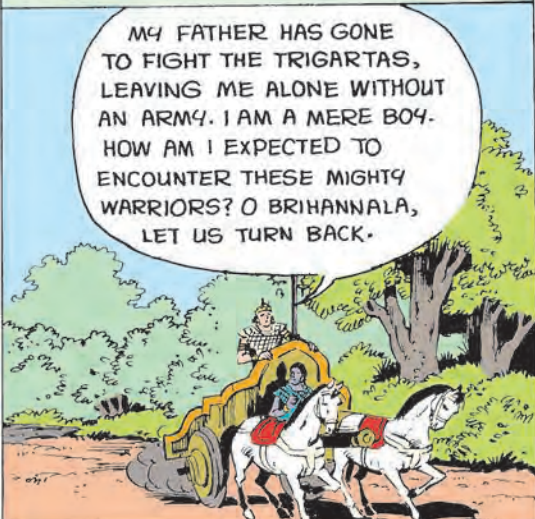


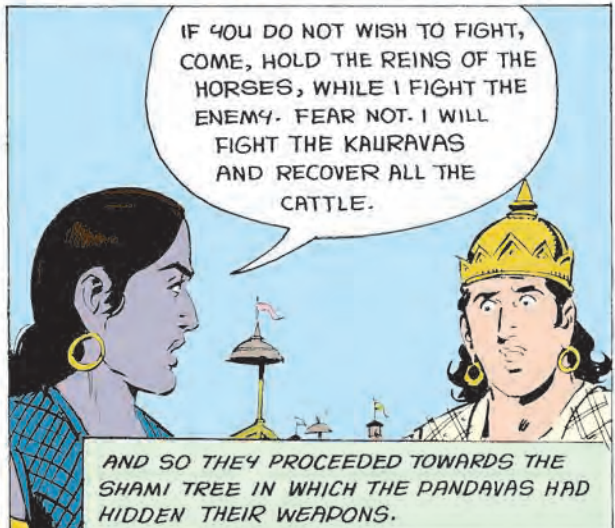
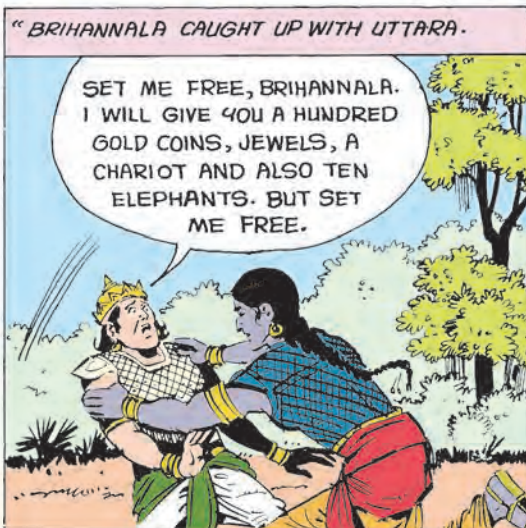
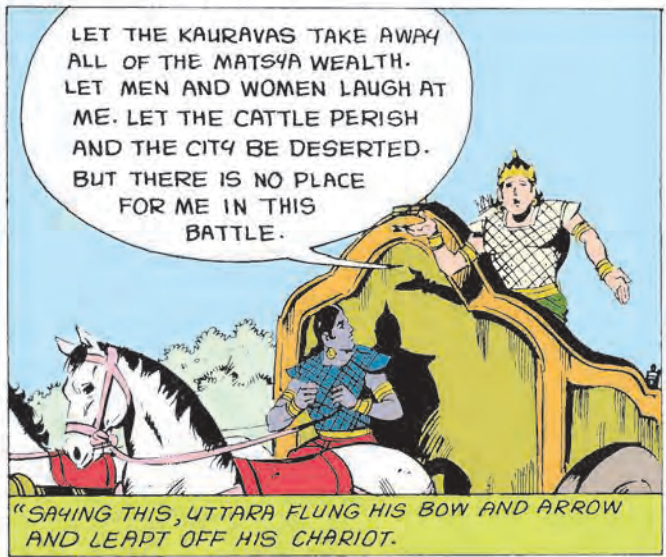
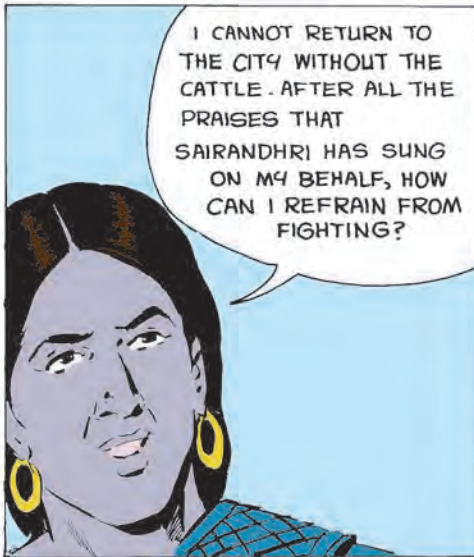
"HEARING THIS, BRIHANNALA SLIPPED OUT QUIETLY AND WENT TO DRAUPADI.



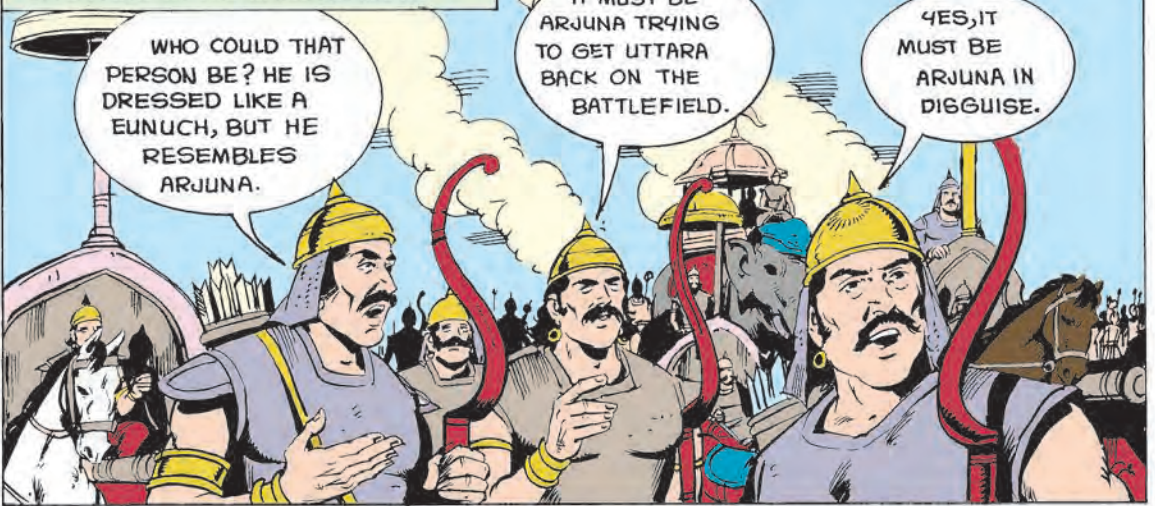


"AND THE WEAK AND FOOLISH UTTARA BEGAN TO BEWAIL HIS FATE.

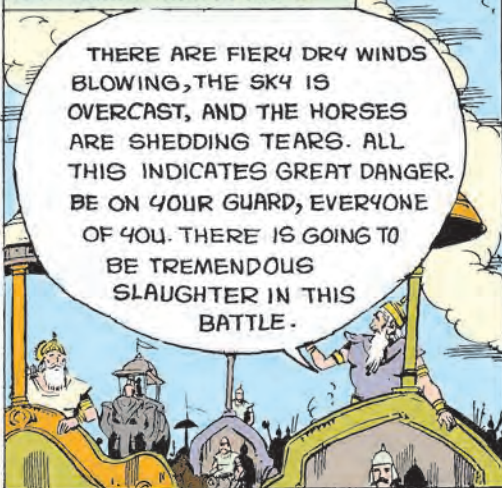




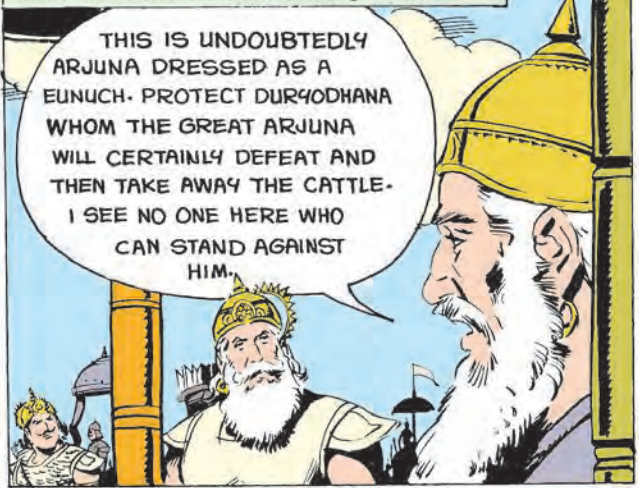
"MEANWHILE IN THE KAURAVA ARMY—"



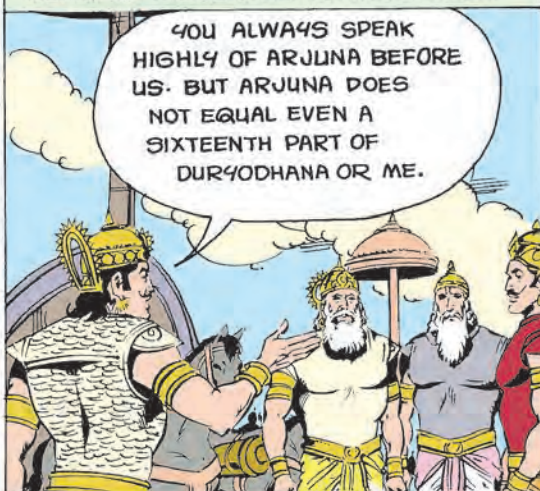
"BUT DRONA WAS WORRIED."



"AND TURNING TO BHEESHMA, HE SAID—"



"HEARING THESE WORDS, KARNA SAID:



"HOWEVER, DURYODHANA WAS ELATED."



"MEANWHILE BRIHANNALA HAD COME TO THE SHAMI TREE IN WHICH THE WEAPONS HAD BEEN HIDDEN.

CLIMB UP THIS TREE AND BRING DOWN THE BOWS THAT ARE KEPT THERE.

WHAT BOWS? THAT IS A CORPSE! I WILL BE DEFILED IF I TOUCH IT.

DO NOT FEAR. YOU WILL REMAIN CLEAN AND UNPOLLUTED. IT IS NOT A CORPSE. IT ONLY LOOKS LIKE ONE.

"UTTARA CLIMBED UP THE SHAMI TREE AND BROUGHT DOWN THE WEAPONS.

"BUT UTTARA COULD NOT HOLD BACK HIS SURPRISE WHEN HE REMOVED THE LEAFY COVERING ON THE WEAPONS —

WEAPONS! TO WHOM DO THESE EXCELLENT WEAPONS BELONG? TELL ME TRUTHFULLY, O BRIHANNALA.

THESE WEAPONS BELONG TO THE MIGHTY PANDAVAS.

BUT WHERE ARE THE BRILLIANT SONS OF PANDU TO WHOM THESE WEAPONS BELONG? WHERE IS THEIR WIFE DRAUPADI?

"BRIHANNALA EXPLAINED TO HIM.

I AM ARJUNA. KANKA, YOUR FATHER'S COURTIER, IS YUDHISHTHIRA AND THE COOK BALLAVA, BHEEMA. GRANTHIKA IS NAKULA, VIRATA'S ROYAL GROOM AND TANTIPALA IS SAHADEVA IN CHARGE OF THE COW-PEN. DRAUPADI IS IN THE DISGUISE OF THE QUEEN'S SAIRANDHRI.

O ARJUNA, I AM FORTUNATE TO BEHOLD YOU. FORGIVE MY HAVING SAID UNSEEMLY THINGS TO YOU.

"MOUNTING THE CHARIOT, UTTARA SAID —

I AM REASSURED NOW. I WILL BE YOUR CHARIOTEER. COMMAND ME AND I WILL DRIVE YOU WHEREVER YOU WISH. GIVE ME YOUR BLESSINGS.

"REPLACING HIS BROTHERS' WEAPONS, ARJUNA TOOK UP HIS OWN.

"THEN HE TOOK OFF HIS BRACELETS AND WORE A PAIR OF GOLD GLOVES. TYING BACK HIS LOCKS WITH A PIECE OF WHITE CLOTH, HE GOT ON TO THE CHARIOT.

DO NOT FEAR. I WILL FIGHT THE KAURAVAS AND RECOVER THE CATTLE.

"AND AS THEY DROVE AHEAD TOWARDS THE KAURAVA ARMY, ARJUNA BLEW HIS CONCH SHELL, DEVADATTA.

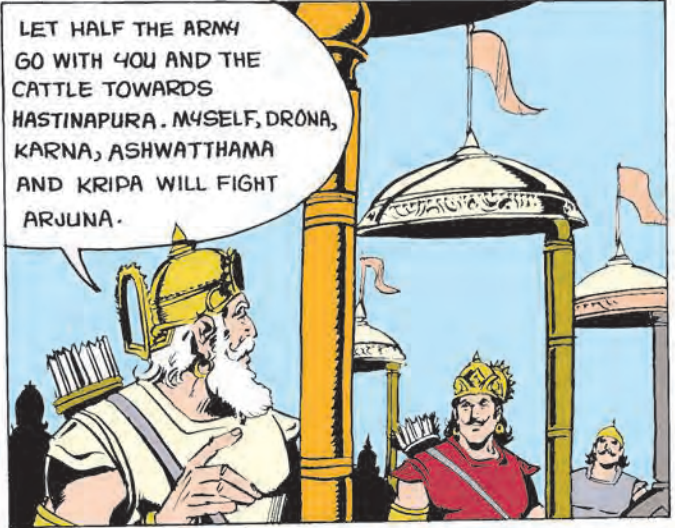
"HEARING THIS, DURYODHANA EXCLAIMED GLEEFULLY —

IT IS ARJUNA! THE PANDAVAS HAVE FAILED TO KEEP THEIR PLEDGE. THEY WILL HAVE TO GO BACK TO THE FOREST FOR ANOTHER TWELVE YEARS.

"BUT BHEESHMA INTERVENED —

THE THIRTEENTH YEAR ENDED FIVE MONTHS AND TWELVE DAYS AGO* IT IS FOR YOU NOW, O DURYODHANA, TO MAKE PEACE OR WAR ON ARJUNA, WHOSE ARRIVAL IS IMMINENT.

* ACCORDING TO THE LUNAR CALENDAR. EVEN ACCORDING TO THE SOLAR CALENDAR THE THIRTEENTH YEAR HAD ENDED SIX DAYS EARLIER.



"FROM HIS CHARIOT, ARJUNA SURVEYED THE KAURAVA FORCES."



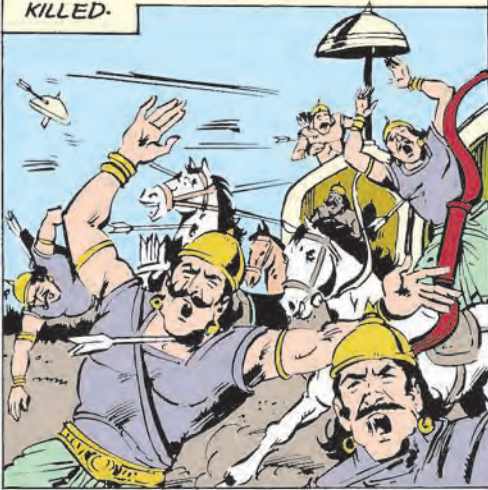
"UTTARA VEERED THE CHARIOT ROUND TO CHASE DURYODHANA..."



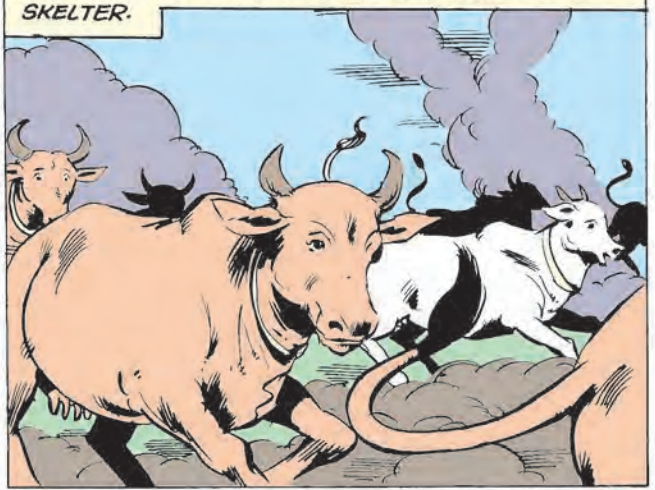
"... WHILE ARJUNA FILLED THE AIR WITH COUNTLESS ARROWS."



"MANY KAURAVA SOLDIERS WERE KILLED."



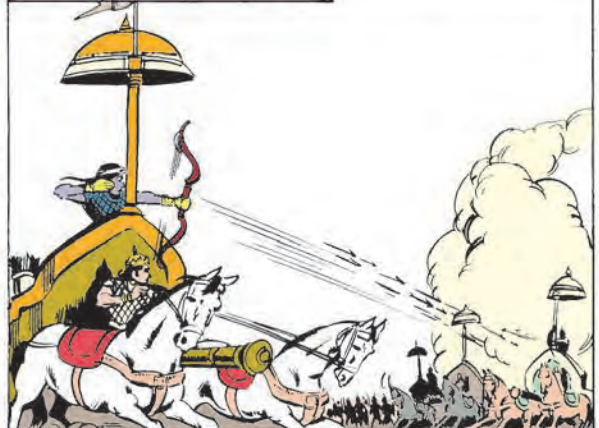
"AND THE CATTLE BROKE LOOSE AND RAN HELTER-SKELTER."



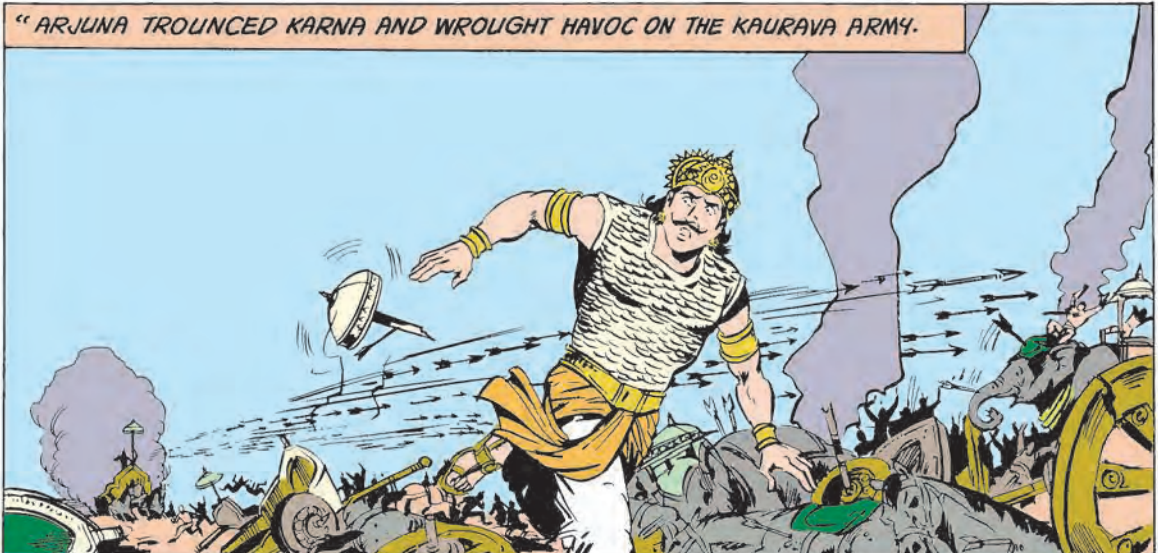
"ARJUNA DROVE THE CATTLE TOWARDS MATSYA AND THEN TOOK THE DIRECTION OF DURYODHANA."



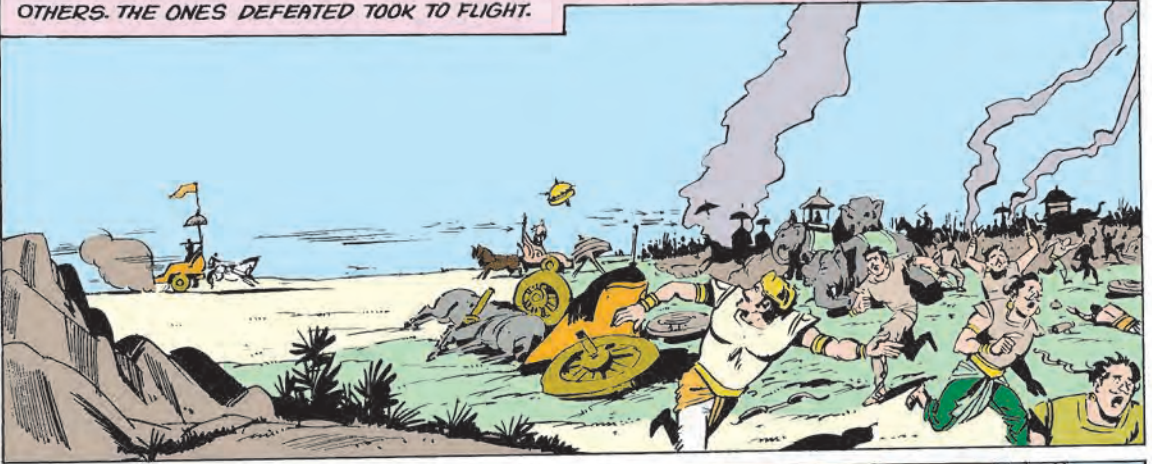
"MEANWHILE, KARNA AND THE OTHER WARRIORS INTERCEPTED ARJUNA."



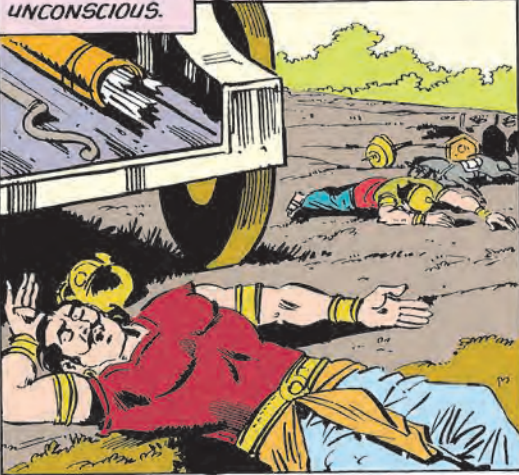
"ARJUNA TROUNCED KARNA AND WROUGHT HAVOC ON THE KAURAVA ARMY."



"HE ALSO REPULSED THE ATTACKS OF KRIPA, DRONA, ASHWAYTHAMA, BHEESHMA AND THE OTHERS. THE ONES DEFEATED TOOK TO FLIGHT."



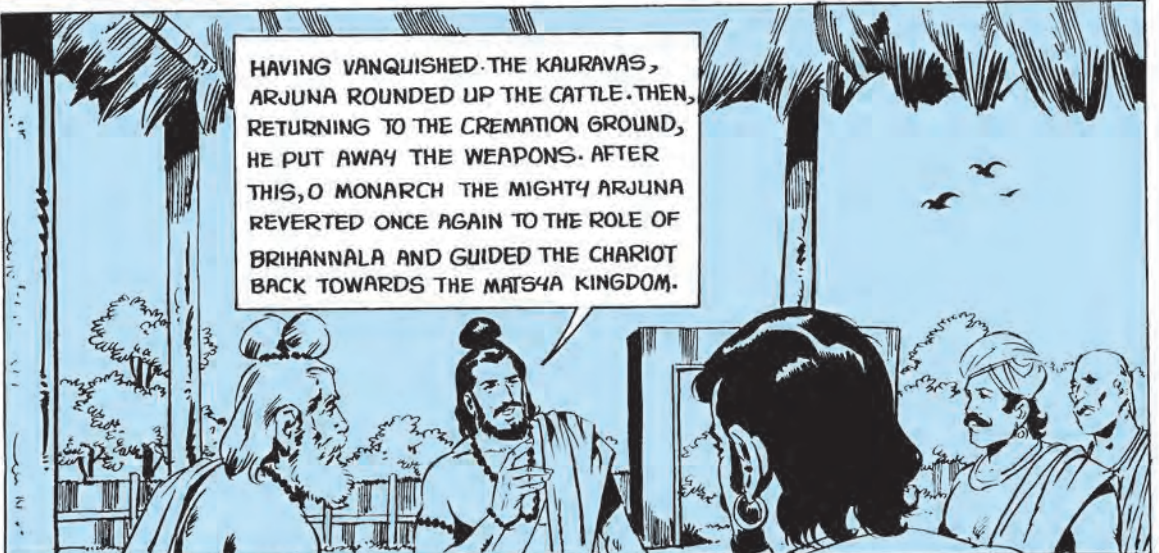
"ARJUNA THEN USED THE SAMMOHANA* WEAPON AND THE REMAINING ARMY FELL UNCONSCIOUS."



"LATER, UTTARA TOOK WITH HIM THE CLOTHES OF THE UNCONSCIOUS SOLDIERS."

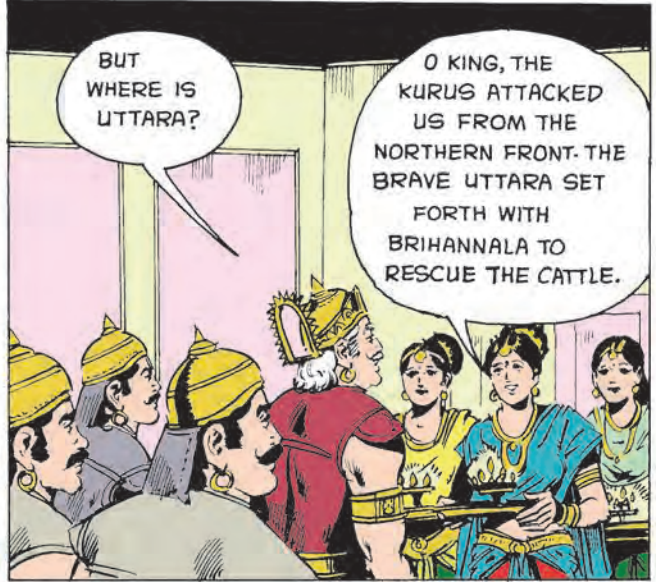
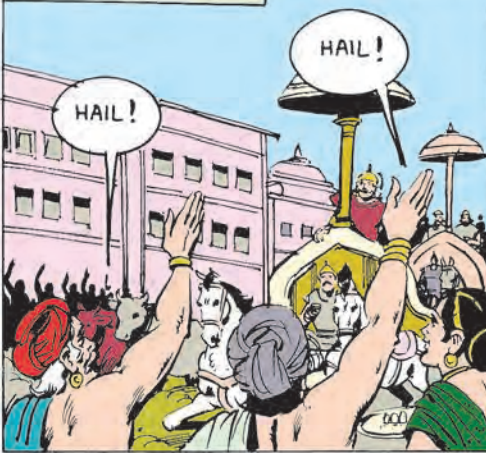


HAVING VANQUISHED THE KAURAVAS, ARJUNA ROUNDED UP THE CATTLE. THEN, RETURNING TO THE CREMATION GROUND, HE PUT AWAY THE WEAPONS. AFTER THIS, O MONARCH THE MIGHTY ARJUNA REVERTED ONCE AGAIN TO THE ROLE OF BRIHANNALA AND GUIDED THE CHARIOT BACK TOWARDS THE MATSYA KINGDOM.



* WEAPON THAT HYPNOTISES

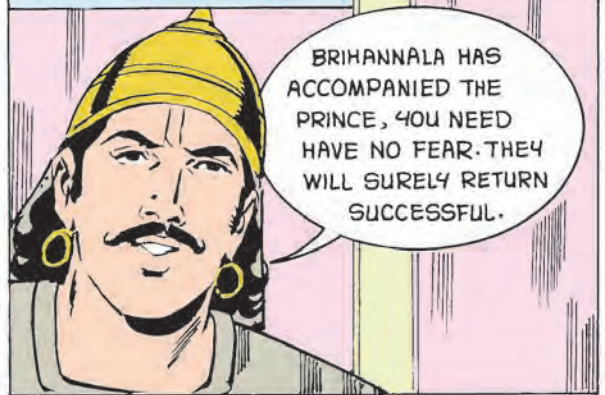
"MEANWHILE, KING VIRATA, HAVING VANQUISHED THE TRIGARTAS, RETURNED TO THE CAPITAL AMIDST GREAT REJOICING.



"VIRATA WAS ANXIOUS.



"BUT YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—



"JUST THEN —



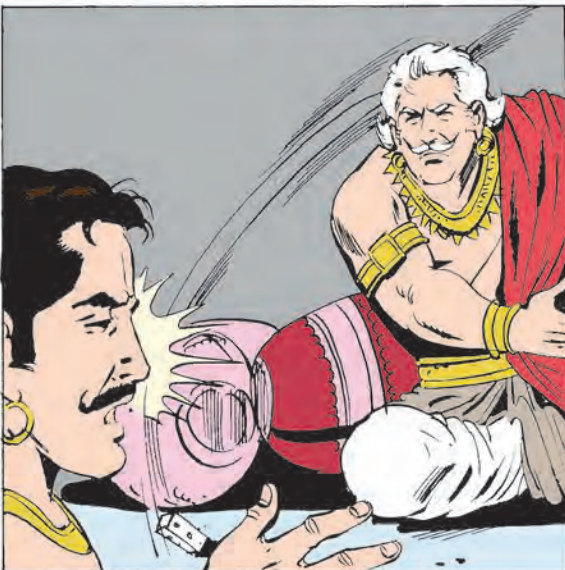
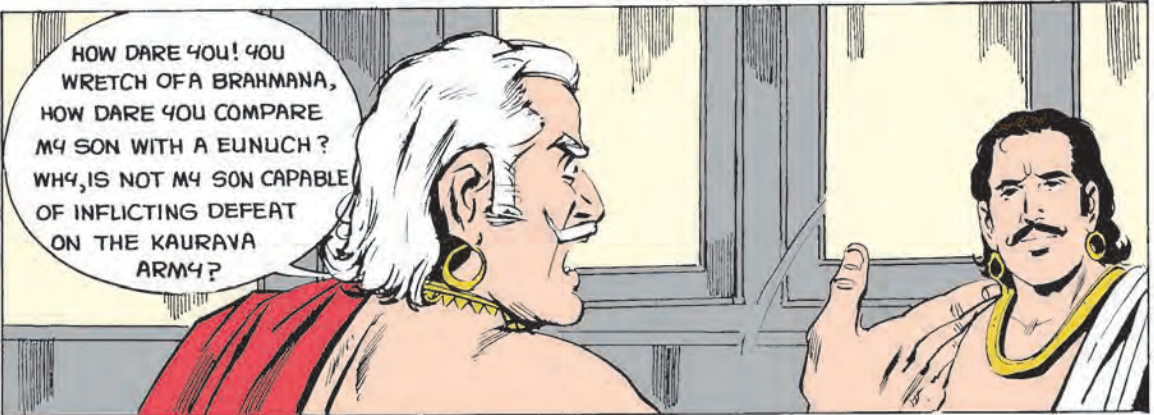
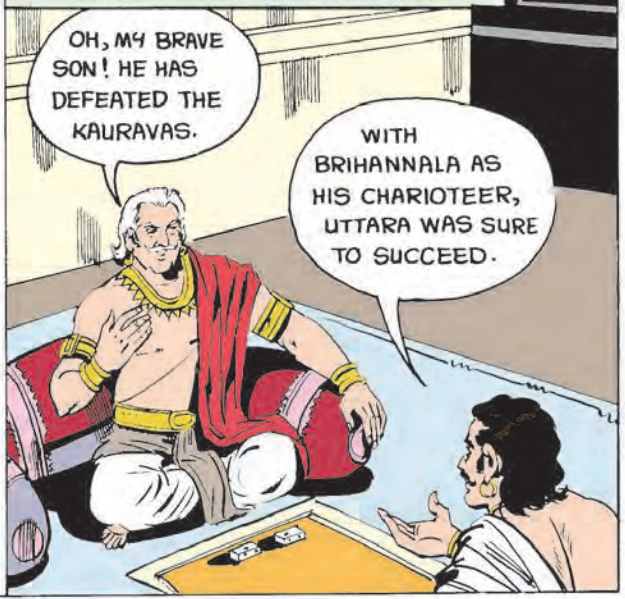
"KING VIRATA, HOWEVER, WAS OVERJOYED.



"THEN VIRATA RETURNED TO HIS CHAMBER."



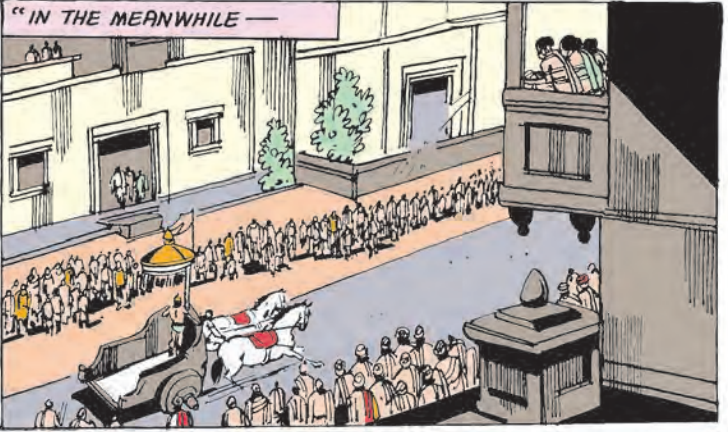
"WHILE THE GAME WAS UNDER WAY —"



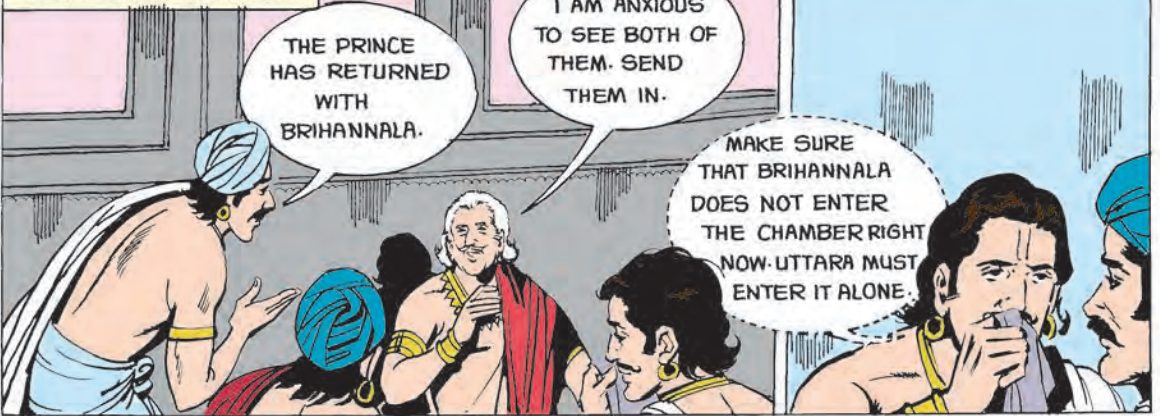
"DRAUPADI IMMEDIATELY CAME FORWARD."



"IN THE MEANWHILE —"

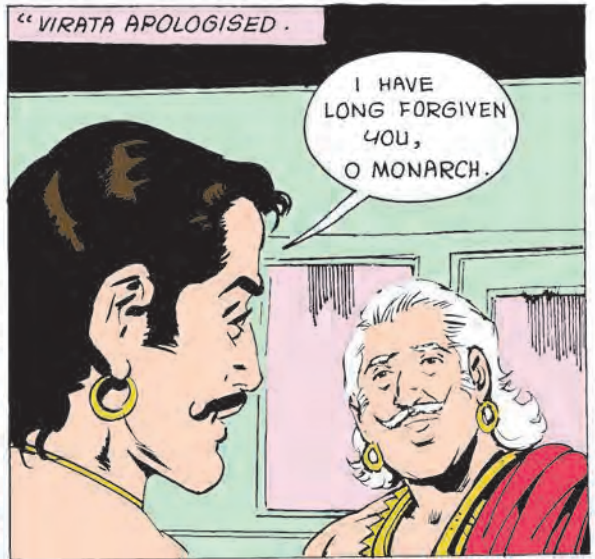


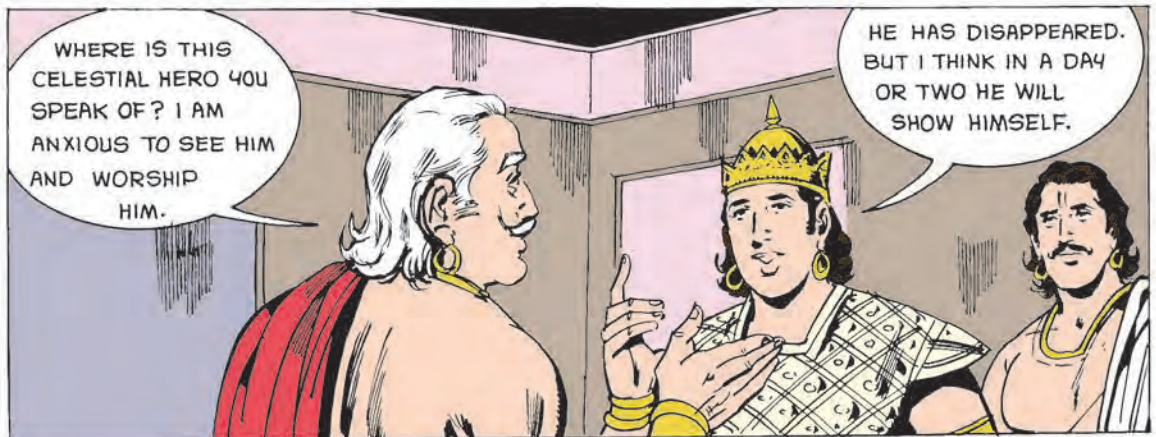
"BACK IN THE CHAMBER—"



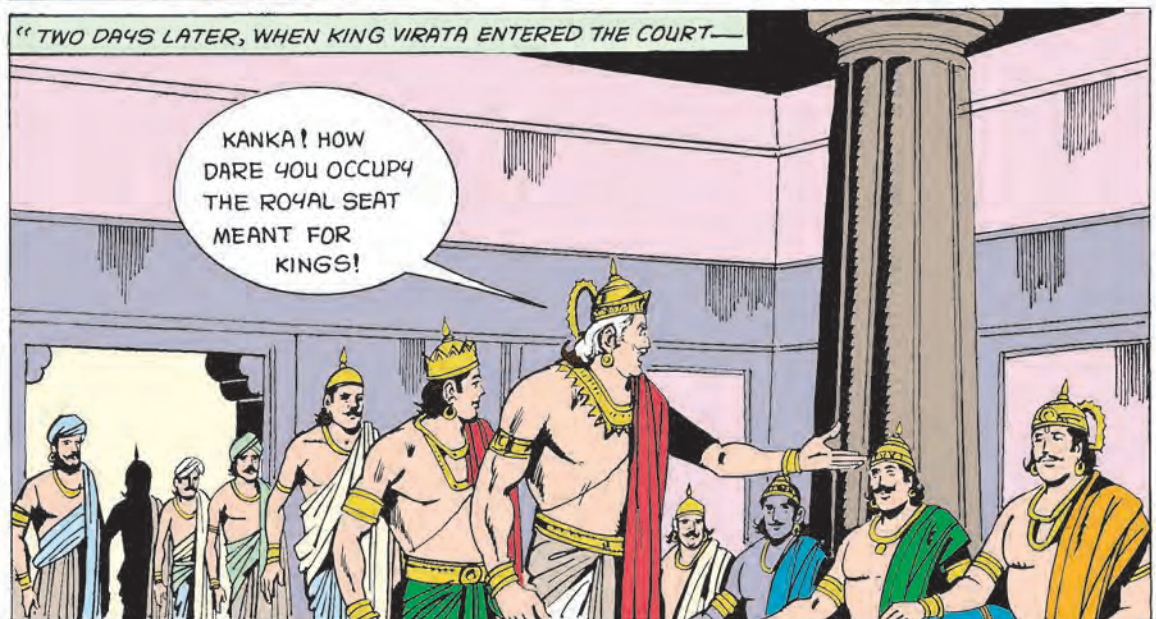
"WHEN UTTARA TURNED ROUND TO PAY HIS RESPECTS TO YUDHISHTHIRA—"

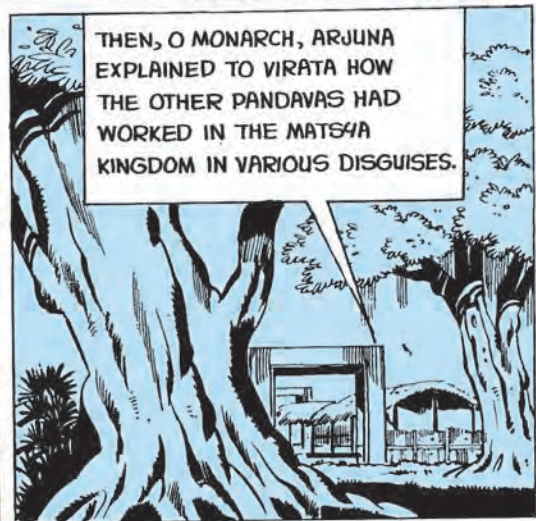
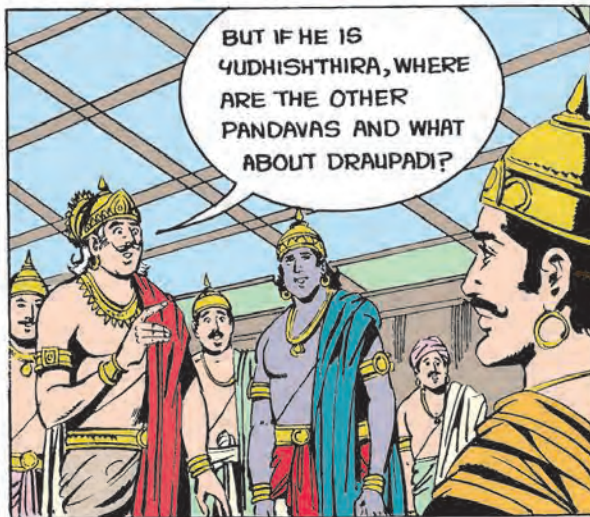
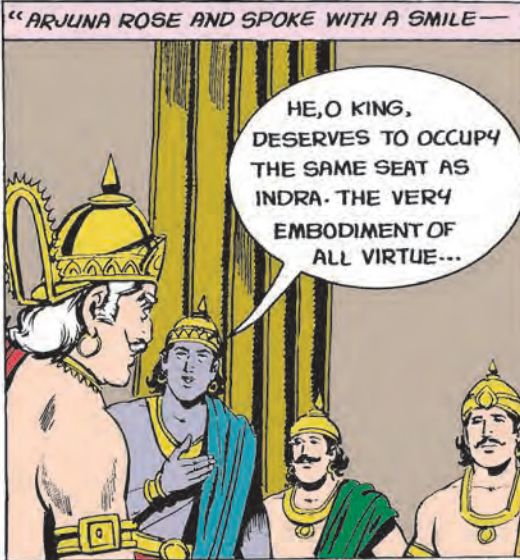






"TWO DAYS LATER, WHEN KING VIRATA ENTERED THE COURT—





"UTTARA SAID —

FATHER! HE
IS THE SON OF THE
DEITY* WHO DEFEATED
THE KAURAVAS AND
RETRIEVED THE
CATTLE.

"SOON —

THE TIME HAS
COME FOR ME TO
PROPIATE THE PANDAVAS.
IF YOU THINK IT RIGHT,
I SHALL OFFER UTTARAA
IN MARRIAGE TO
ARJUNA.

YES,
FATHER.

"TURNING TO YUDHISHTHIRA, VIRATA
SAID —

I AM HAPPY THAT
YOU HAVE COME
THROUGH ALL THE
DIFFICULTIES.
I OFFER YOU ALL
I HAVE AND
BESECH ARJUNA
TO MARRY MY
DAUGHTER
UTTARAA.

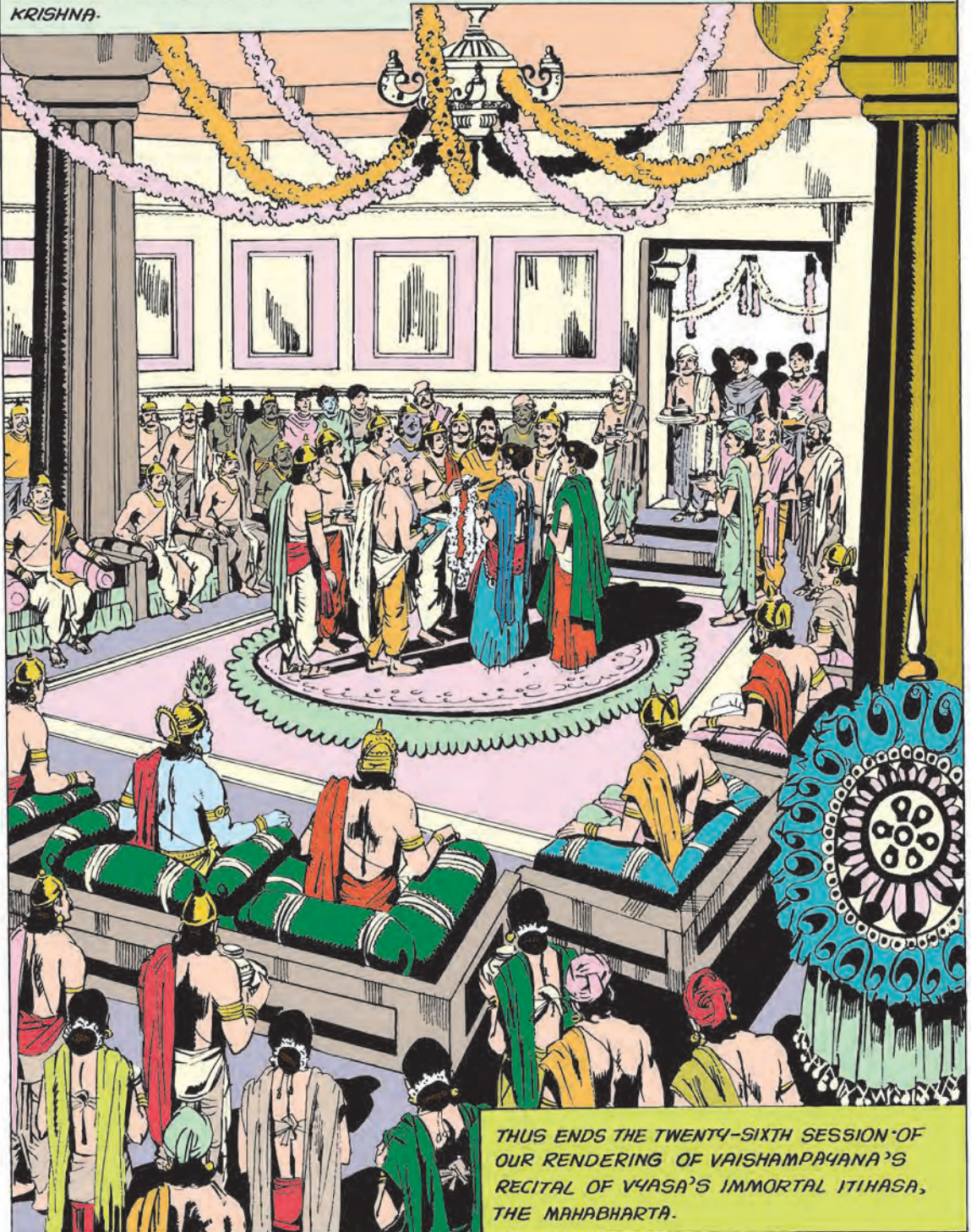
"BUT ARJUNA SAID —

O KING, AS
UTTARAA'S TEACHER
I LOOKED UPON HER
AS A DAUGHTER. I WILL
ACCEPT HER AS ONE.
LET HER MARRY MY
SON ABHIMANYU.

SO BE
IT.

* ARJUNA WAS OBTAINED BY KUNTI THROUGH THE BLESSING OF INDRA.

"THE PANDAVAS THEN TOOK UP THEIR ABODE IN THE MATSYA TOWN OF UPAPLAYA. ABHIMANYU WAS SENT FOR. AND ON THE DAY OF THE WEDDING, GUESTS POURED IN FROM ALL DIRECTIONS. THE KING OF KASHI, THE MIGHTY DRUPADA, THE INVINCIBLE DHRSHTADYUMNA AND SEVERAL BRAHMANAS CAME. KRISHNA ALSO CAME WITH A HUGE RETINUE TO GIVE HIS BLESSINGS TO THE COUPLE. AND ARJUNA ACCEPTED UTTARA AS HIS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW IN THE PRESENCE OF KRISHNA."



THUS ENDS THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, THE MAHABHARTA.